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# Editorial

Well, here we are at last – my final issue of *MG Enthusiast* as editor. I'd like to think it is a case of going out in style given that this is a bumper issue with 132 pages, and I certainly hope you enjoy all that it has to offer. If you do like it, then by all means copy me in on any correspondence via [simon.goldsworthy@kelsey.co.uk](mailto:simon.goldsworthy@kelsey.co.uk). If, however, you have any complaints, then just stick to the regular *MGE* email address of [mg.ed@kelsey.co.uk](mailto:mg.ed@kelsey.co.uk)!

I had thought I would see many of you at MG Live! this summer, but the shock announcement this week that Silverstone have decided to resurface their track in June and so cancelled the MGCC date has put paid to that idea (see p10). I know that the Kimber House team are working feverishly to come up with an alternative venue and date for their 2019 gathering, but we are already in March so that is a very tall order. However, I wonder if this could turn out to be of long-term benefit even if it comes with a lot of short-term pain? My thinking here is that while tradition and familiarity have their positives, they can also trap you in the past and limit your options for the future. It has become so entrenched in some circles that the MG Car Club's big event simply has to be held at Silverstone and nowhere else because that is how it's always been done that the idea of trying something different never really seems to gain much traction. Could it be that now they've been forced by circumstances into doing things differently, people may find they quite like the novelty of something new?

Interestingly, there is a parallel to this way of thinking in my own review of the MGs that have passed through my hands over the past 13 years (p114). Digging out the old pictures and looking through back issues to remind myself of when they first appeared and when they were sold has been a lovely trip down memory lane, and inevitably there were occasions when I wanted to kick myself for selling this or that MG. However, the counterpoint to this is that if I hadn't sold one, then I couldn't have bought the next and I would have missed out on that experience. All of which does rather bring me back to where I started this editorial. I shall miss *MG Enthusiast*, the cars and especially the people that come with it, and maybe this time next year I will be kicking myself for moving on. On the other hand there are a whole world of new experiences out there, and I'd hate to look back one day and wonder: 'What if...?' Besides, there will still be MGs in *Classics Monthly*. So thank you everyone for all your help and support over the years, it has been a blast and I shall miss you.

**Simon Goldsworthy, Editor**

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IT'S COMING AUTUMN 2019



MGZSEV

# ZS EV is the name for the UK

The new MG ZS EV (as the battery-electric version of the ZS will be called in the UK) arrives this autumn. MG Motor is inviting potential customers to register their interest at [www.mg.co.uk/electric](http://www.mg.co.uk/electric), reports David Knowles

**A**fter some uncertainty over which name MG will use in English-speaking markets for its new all-electric version of the ZS (would it be the eZS as first indicated last year, or the EZS?), MG Motor UK's Sales & Marketing Director Daniel Gregorios has confirmed to *MG Enthusiast* that the new model will be known – in the UK market at least – as the MG ZS EV. The formal unveiling is expected at the London Motor Show in May, and *MG Enthusiast* will be among the first to bring you full details of this exciting and important addition to the MG portfolio, the first of many more hybrid and fully electric models destined for MG dealerships over the coming five years.

Gregorios told us: 'With the launch of our MG ZS electric SUV we're delighted to be entering the electric car market at such an exciting time. With all the practicality and versatility of a compact SUV, a full-sized boot and room for five people, ZS means electric without compromise. With MG's trademark value-for-money approach, we're confident that we can help more and more new car buyers to go electric.'

## MG BACK IN NEW ZEALAND – AGAIN

MG in its modern SAIC-owned guise has already returned to New Zealand once in recent years and modern MGs are already on sale in that country, so

you may be forgiven for thinking that the heading is wrong. However, what has happened is that as in nearby Australia, the sales and marketing of MG has been taken back in-house by a subsidiary of the parent company. In the case of New Zealand, the new people now in charge have gracefully acknowledged the work done by British Motor Distributors who, it must be said, appear to have done a much better job with the marque than the initial Australian set-up.

Already on sale in the land of the Kiwi over the past two years has been a variant of the older MG6 known as the MG6 Plus (not to be confused with the new generation MG6 now on sale in China and a few other LHD markets), a manual transmission version of the MG3 (not far off the older UK version) and the MG GS mid-size SUV. Under the new management, the range is being swiftly revamped with the roll-out later this year of broadly the same model range as in Australia, which to date principally means an automatic-transmission MG3 and the MG ZS SUV.

Peter Cao was already CEO of SAIC Motor Australia and, in common with Danny Lenart who was already MG Motor Australia's Marketing & Communications Director, responsibility for New Zealand has been added into their portfolios and job titles. At the same time, SAIC has brought in a new face in British ex-pat Anthony Maclean, until recently Mercedes-Benz New



**ABOVE:** A recent addition to the UK market MG3 range is the return of this black paint option, known as Black Pearl, bringing the choice of colours to seven.

Zealand's National Sales Manager, who will be responsible as Business Manager, MG Motor New Zealand for national MG sales in the local market from his new base in Auckland.

Although nothing more has been said beyond the initial announcement and model programme, it seems likely that New Zealand MG customers will soon benefit from a broadly comparable product mix to their nearest neighbours, which surely means the MG ZS EV, MG HS and perhaps the production version of the MG E-Motion Coupé.

## MARKET CHAOS IN CHINA?

Many recent car-related headlines, in particular those in the UK and across mainland Europe, have been laden with doom and gloom. Certainly problems facing UK car making and manufacture have been exacerbated by a fall in diesel sales (which affects some companies more than others; MG Motor UK no longer sells diesel vehicles), but the fact remains that most of the global panic has been focused on what has been happening in the Chinese new car market, arguably now the most important in the whole world.

Chinese tastes have influenced product mixes in subtle ways; not only have some car makers tuned their designs closer towards perceived Chinese tastes, but the preferences of the Chinese customer for four or five-door cars has precipitated the end for many car makers of the two/three door variants of their bread and butter ranges. Despite this, tastes are evolving in China just as they do elsewhere, and the MG E-Motion, a concept first shown in Shanghai just over two years ago, is a sleek two-door coupé.

As we have covered over recent issues, for a number of years meteoric growth in the Chinese car market has fuelled



**ABOVE:** Peter Cao (on the right in this photo) was already CEO of SAIC Motor Australia, and has added New Zealand to his responsibilities; standing alongside him is Anthony Maclean, the new Business Manager, MG Motor New Zealand.

opportunities for manufacturers around the world. Sales had been rising strongly and consistently on the back of both a Chinese consumer boom and many local government incentives, not least for electric and other low-emission cars, a consequence being that China is now one of the world's principal markets for such vehicles. However, over the past few months the Chinese market has, to put it mildly, experienced something of a wobble, and some makes have suffered more than others.

Things started to go wrong last summer. Up until July 2018, sales in China seemed to be fairly strong, but under the surface the sector was overheating due to a number of factors, such that by November sales were 13% below the equivalent figures for 2017. International issues such as trade tariffs, coupled with the ending of some Chinese government incentives and the

tightening of consumer loans in China, all contributed to this malaise.

Inevitably there were some relative winners and losers in the ensuing turmoil, with some Chinese consumers turning their backs on import brands like Jaguar Land Rover (JLR) whose sales in China fell by a staggering 50% in the same period referred to above. This was not helped by some difficulties with the local distributors, and even the fact that Range Rover Evoques and Jaguar XEs are now assembled in China by a local partner could not arrest the fall. As widely reported in the UK media, JLR's woes spilled over into workforce lay-offs in the UK and a significant financial loss measured in the billions.

Meanwhile the uncertainties surrounding Brexit have hardly helped to steady the market in the UK. Just in the last month Honda announced the decision to close its British factory at Swindon in 2021, Toyota and BMW have made cautious warnings about future investment, and there have even been rumours about TATA's commitment to JLR on the back of the problems mentioned above.

For SAIC, meanwhile, the situation in China has been more of a mixed bag. As we have explained in previous issues, SAIC's major sales volume in China comes through its joint ventures with VW and GM. SAIC-GM suffered a drop in sales which stemmed in part from nervousness about the situation with US tariffs, but also according to local media reports with concerns from some more conservative Chinese customers »



**ABOVE:** On the near horizon for New Zealand are the GS, ZS and MG3 Automatic.



« about the introduction of three-cylinder engines into some of the GM models (it is not clear if these are the same as the ZS powertrain).

SAIC-VW has on the other hand seen sustained sales volumes, with the roll-out of a galaxy of new models exclusive to the Chinese market and the resolution of a big falling out with the local Audi distributors in 2017. Against the backdrop of a stumbling Chinese market, MG and Roewe have continued to do well, with the introduction of electric and hybrid models an important factor. The arrival of the MG eZS – or MG ZS EV as it is to be known in the UK – could hardly have come at a better time. Obviously Brexit may be a factor in future sales, but arguably MG Motor is a little more immune to this because its manufacturing bases are, for the time being at least, all outside Europe.

One thing that is certain in all this is that the Chinese government, with its firm hand on the tiller of the national economy, will be keen to reverse recent setbacks and ensure that the market starts to grow again this year. Fuelled by the unwelcome stigma of recession, it seems highly likely that there will be fresh incentives for domestic customers to draw them back into the showrooms. In all likelihood some of the woes of 2018 will be history by 2020, just as MG embarks on the next round of new product launches.




*Next in line for the MG Motor India treatment is believed to be this Baojun 510, a slightly smaller model than the 530 on which the new MG Hector will be based.*

## MG MOTOR INDIA GROWS

MG (Morris Garages) Motor India recently opened its impressive new corporate HQ in Gurugram, an event which took place in the midst of the company's Indian 'meet the public' sessions where examples of the Chinese market MG range, including the ZS and MG6, have been on show as a demonstration of MG's design and quality offer, even before the first Indian market model, the locally built MG Hector, goes on sale this summer.

As explained in recent issues, the MG Hector will be closely based on the Chinese-market Baojun 530; also in the pipeline is believed to be a larger seven-seat SUV, possibly derived from the same basis as the Hector, and a smaller, as yet unnamed MG to be based on the Baojun's smaller brother, the 510. MG Motor Chairman Rajeev Chaba

has also promised an all-electric MG for India, and the safe money is that this will be the MG ZS EV, probably imported fully built at first and aimed at India's metropolitan customers.

India is, of course, a vast nation and has many cities and so if MG is to be a real success, there may be scope for more production capacity. The existing 170-acre Halol site in Gujarat will be able to cope with up to 80,000 vehicles per annum (initially the Hector and then at least two more MGs), but if sales are to expand beyond that, and perhaps even extend to targeted exports within the region, then a second factory may become desirable. With this in mind, it has been rumoured that SAIC is contemplating an investment of \$350million in a second plant, with a decision either way anticipated by the end of this year. 

## At last – a genuine high performance MG3!

Ever since the MG3 went on sale in the UK, people have been asking in vain for more power. Well now there is an option – Retro Sports Cars have engineered a turbocharged K-series conversion, and Kmaps have helped tune it to 250Ps. They also say a reliable 320Ps is possible if you strengthen the engine internals...

The K-series fits perfectly in the engine bay with no sheet metal changes whatsoever, so it looks

as good as a factory option. The suspension has been developed with Vehicle Handling Solutions Ltd, and the brakes have been uprated to cope with the additional power. The only visual change though is the fitment of a Chinese-spec front bumper.

The initial test car is now running and MoT'd. The plan is to use this car for a month or so, then take it back apart so they can get drawings and jigs of the bespoke parts for batch

production. Retro Sports Cars will then offer the conversion, but sending cars out completed rather than selling the kits, partly to keep control over the quality, but also because of the complexity of the electronics involved.

This demonstrator will be at the Pride of Longbridge event on 13 April, with orders being taken for conversions from the summer. We will, of course, bring you a full report as soon as possible.



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# MG Live! thrown into disarray

In shock news just before we went to press, the MG Car Club announced that due to Silverstone Circuits Limited's decision to undertake essential track maintenance during June 2019, MG Live! has lost its venue and dates. Originally scheduled for 15-16 June, preparations were already well under way and this must come as a bitter blow to all concerned, on a practical as well as an emotional level – Silverstone has been the home of the MGCC's annual gathering for decades.

The club are now exploring options to move the event to a new location and date, and further announcements will be made on this in due course once arrangements are in place. However the scale of the task should not be underestimated, with the organisers effectively having to start from scratch with just months to go. Add to this the fact that few suitable venues will have dates free at such short notice and you'll begin to understand the scale of the task facing the small team at Kimber House and their many volunteer helpers.

Adam Sloman, General Manager of the club, commented: 'We are incredibly sorry to be sharing such devastating news and everyone at the club is so distraught that we are no longer able to hold MG Live! at Silverstone this year, due to this Force



Majeure situation. It is such a shame, as we have experienced record sales versus previous years, with many members and classic car enthusiasts purchasing tickets well in advance. We are deeply sorry to all of those ticket holders and enthusiasts who have supported the club and event to date.'

However, Adam added: 'We are absolutely making every effort to find an alternative option for MG Live! in 2019. We are not going to be beaten by this. We are working very hard to find a solution for a venue that can hold our unique race and entertainment event, and hope to make a further announcement soon confirming the arrangements going forwards. Once



we have those arrangements in place, we will be in touch with all our current ticket holders outlining the options that will be available to them. We'd like to thank the classic car community in advance for their support and understanding.'

## New Mirror Trim website

Mirror Trim, the Bedfordshire-based firm who have carved out an enviable reputation for their MGA and MGB/C interiors, have now moved things on to a new level. Over the last 12 months they have been investing heavily in tooling so that they can bring as much manufacturing as possible in-house, ensuring they have full control over the quality. This has coincided with an expansion in the range of services and parts they offer, now extending as it does from seat covers to sound deadening and from headlining kits to crash rails.

'The finishes that people are requesting has changed over the years, and we are keen to respond to this,' added Mirror Trim's Paul Aylett. 'For example, people always used to want either leather or vinyl for their seat covers, but we are finding more and more owners are now asking for cloth, particularly the Alcantara style of material. So we have started producing a range using a similar micro suede for Bs and Cs, which has proven to be very popular (more so with the ladies) and also provides some great new colour combinations.'

To help potential customers navigate the myriad options, Mirror Trim have now launched a new website which is more comprehensive than ever, yet still extremely user-friendly. Visitors can, for example, use drop down boxes to select and browse an even larger range of leathers and vinyls. You can check it out at [www.mirrortrim.co.uk](http://www.mirrortrim.co.uk), or alternatively give them a call on 01525 874858.



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## Race Retro at Stoneleigh

This year's Race Retro at Stoneleigh on 22-24 February saw record crowds of nearly 25,000 in attendance – the good weather must have helped swell the numbers, particularly on the Saturday and Sunday when the live rally stage was in progress.

Race Retro is about motorsport in all its forms, and there is no more suitable marque than MG that fits those objectives as MGs have found success in the past 95 years in all 12 motorsport disciplines and at everything from club to international level. With pride of place inside the main entrance was the MG Car Club, who had cars on display to show the range of racing and speed events that the club encompass. They were also pushing the fact that entry fees are being held at last year's level, and that there are big discounts for under 25s. It seemed to work, as club officials reported strong interest, with several new recruits to the racing and speed championships.

Elsewhere, Oselli had a nearly



completed MGB shell on display which will soon be an FIA spec race car for the Equipe GTS series. Equipe had their own display for the GTS and pre-'63 series with a very fine racing MGA on display. The GTS outfit are almost embarrassed by the level of interest in their races, with places being hard to come by.

There were three Metro 6R4s on the Group B rally display, and Tim Lawrence's BGT was also in Hall 1 showing that a car with minor mods can be successful in the HERO-type endurance rallies. In the invited paddock visitors could admire the ex-Jean Denton Marathon car which the MGB Register have sympathetically restored.

Outdoors, the two rally stages attracted around 120 cars in three groups according to age. The first included current cars like a Hyundai i20 R5, with the sole MG in this group being an immaculate ZR. The middle group also had an MG presence thanks to the ever-popular Metro 6R4s, including that of the very experienced Warren Philiskirk who has owned and rallied his car for many years. **Graeme Forrester**



## N.A.S. Car Run

MG & Alfa Spares boss Jason Swinyard is putting on a charity road run for MGs and other classic cars in aid of the National Autistic Society. Called the N.A.S. CAR 2019 MG & Classic Car Run, it is taking place on Sunday 11th August, assembling from 10am at MG & Alfa Spares' premises at Unit 10, Stockfield Mill, Melbourne Street, Chadderton, Oldham OL9 9EW. The run will be between 60 and 80 miles, and it will finish at a local pub with ample parking. Entry is just £20 per car, and that entry fee includes:

- \*Morning tea or coffee
- \*Your own Monte Carlo style bumper plaque
- \*Full instructions for the detailed route along some great driving roads
- \*Ample time and opportunity for rest breaks at various places of interest en route

Please note that this event is not a race or time trial of any kind, the idea is just to enjoy the day in your classic car. For more information contact Jason Swinyard at MG & Alfa Spares on 07711 097957 or email him at [mg-alfa-spares@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:mg-alfa-spares@hotmail.co.uk)

## Coast to Coast

Wigton Motor Club will be holding their first Coast to Coast one-day tour on Friday 20th September, and all enthusiasts driving historic, classic and other fine and sporting cars of any age are invited. Starting from St Bees in West Cumbria, the route will be in four sections interspersed with breaks for coffee, lunch and afternoon tea and will finish at Raven Hall Hotel on the east coast between Whitby and Scarborough. This Touring Assembly is a non-timed, non-competitive event run entirely on public roads. The route will consist of a mix of minor roads, but with some A class road mileage to keep the event moving eastwards.

Entry will be £85 per crew of two for non-members, and places are limited to 40 cars. Special rates for accommodation have been arranged, but they must be booked by 1st May. Promising an interesting route on scenic driving roads, you can find full details on the events page of the club website at [www.wigtonmc.co.uk](http://www.wigtonmc.co.uk)

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# From Perth to Poole

**H**elped perhaps by a spell of warm weather this February, the auction market seems to have recovered from its autumn blip with strong sales throughout the country. We'll kick off this month's report in Perthshire, where only two MGs made it to Morris Leslie's sale – a 1980 BGT at £3912 and a '67 Midget with only 27k miles showing which sold for £3180.

Trekking about 300 miles south to Leominster, Brightwells had around 150 lots on offer, but not all were vehicles – unless you count a Soviet era surface-to-air missile as a means of transport. That failed to reach its reserve, but then again it can't be the easiest thing to value! The ranks were also swelled with motorcycles and more than a few tractors, but variety is the spice of auction life.

Seven MGs were in evidence on the day, and only one failed to find a new keeper. That was a 27k miles (indicated) B Roadster registered in 1980 and fitted with a set of chrome bumpers to make it look older. Unusually, that was the only MGB on offer, although there was a CGT up for grabs. Most Cs were registered in 1968 and '69, so it was noteworthy that this one sat around for a year or two before finally hitting the road. Adorned with Minilite-style wheels, a Sebring front end and a tuned engine, £14,850 bought it.

A pair of green Midgets also went through the sale. £3410 secured a '77 1500 with a huge history file revealing that far more had been spent on restoration than the new owner paid for the whole car. Also in green and with plenty of history, a 1966 MkII made £6600, reflecting the rarity of early models. Predictably though, the 1939 SA attracted the highest bid – £26,950 all-in to be precise. Only four owners from new and complete with history and a photographic record

of its restoration in the 1990s, this was a time-warp machine that could still be used today thanks to 85mph performance from its 2.3-litre six.

Meanwhile, £20,900 bagged one of MG's immediate postwar output in the bijou form of a TC. It had lived in Canada before finally coming home last year and although some of the details were sketchy, it seems that a 2000-hour nut and bolt rebuild had been carried out in the 1980s. At the other end of the age range, a Maestro 2.0 EFI from a private collection went for £1760, which was disappointing for everyone but the buyer. As the catalogue pointed out, there are only 170 left roaming the roads, and although the first MG-badged Maestro 1600 was plagued by reliability issues, the 2-litre injected version showed that the Rover Group could deliver the goods and take on the rabble of hot hatches.

Moving now to Barons at Sandown, they sold 48 out of 69 lots. The headline lot was a £14,520 Peugeot 309GTI with 111 miles clocked by one owner. Not much to do with MGs, except to demonstrate that the times they are a-changing in the classic world, with increasing interest in cars that seem quite modern to those of us who grew up with Midgets and Bs. Speaking of which, three MGs were listed. A very good 1975 BGT on wires made £7370, and a 2001 F broke the four-figure barrier to settle at £1125. Another rubber bumper BGT that looked to be close to the road after a couple of years storage failed to reach what seemed a realistic estimate of £1750-£2500.

At the opposite end of GB to Morris Leslie, SWVA at Poole sold six out of seven MGs, the sticker being a late B Roadster with a £4k estimate. Cheapest on the day was a 1962 Midget, complete but ripe for restoration, which was hammered away for £1000. MkIs in any condition are rare, so that looked like a




**Matching numbers 1948 TC: £20,900.**



**SA restored in the 1990s: £26,950.**

good deal. From a later branch of the same family, £6350 (plus commission) bought a 1967 model, which was at the top end of expectations.

A 1969 BGT from a deceased's estate sold for £8100, while those seeking more power in the same package could have snapped up a factory V8 for £12,600 or a CGT for £23,600. The latter had originally been a dealer demonstrator before being picked up for £1100 by its sole owner. It was in use until 1981, then stored, rescued and finally restored to a very high standard, as the price suggests. Last but not least in the Dorset tropics, a 1929 M-Type – Abingdon's first sports car? – achieved £14,500. There is not enough space to delve into its 90-year life unfortunately, but that sounds quite cheap for a slice of motoring history.

In a busy month, Historics was also in action at Ascot, selling 80% of 168 lots for a £3m turnover. Half a dozen MGs were lined up, with only one, a 1952 TD estimated at £20,000-£25,000, emerging as a No Sale. Another similar example was considerably cheaper, selling for £16,520. A pair of MGA Roadsters fetched £15,680 and £17,920, more or less as expected, while the B contingent comprised a '72 GT at £8680 and a '64 ragtop at £12,600. 



**1966 Midget MkII older resto: £6600.**



**Midget MkI ready for restoration: £1k.**



**£14,850 for this late-registered CGT.**

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## MGB Roadster shell **Price: £6695**

MGOC Spares is holding a complete replacement MGB Roadster late rubber bumper (76-on) bodysell, part number HZA5545, inclusive of doors, bonnet and bootlid. Providing the perfect base for an MGB V8 roadster conversion, chrome bumper conversion or rubber bumper re-shell, it was manufactured on the original press tooling by British Motor Heritage and is presented in carriage primer. Ready for seam sealing and painting, it is priced to clear at a saving of over £4304.20 off the RRP. There is just the one available, so don't delay if you are interested. Call MGOC Spares on 01954 230928.



## Machine Mart Spring/Summer catalogue

**Price: Free**



The new Machine Mart Spring/Summer catalogue is out now, packed full of all the tools and equipment you need whether you are a hobbyist, DIY enthusiast or professional. Featuring over 600 price cuts and more than 21,000 items of tools and machinery in stores across the country and online, this is essential reading for the hands-on owner. To order your catalogue, simply go online to **www.machinemart.co.uk**, visit your local store or call 0844 880 1265.

## Coolant hose kits

**Price: various**

Abingdon MG can offer a large range of coolant water hoses for MGs, and they can be supplied packaged as kits or as individual hoses. There are two types of hose available – rubber with Kevlar woven into the hose that come with a three-year warranty, or rubber with polyester woven in that come with a two-year warranty. To speak to a sales advisor and see if they stock hoses for your car and to find out about the great prices currently on offer, call 0121 543 1626.



## Mini-screwdriver

**Price: £5.10**

Stuck for the right tool for the more delicate components on your MG? Or perhaps you are screaming at a kid's toy or about to launch a laptop or mobile phone across the room because you can't get into it? The Matador 4 Penny mini screwdriver may well be the perfect solution, with reversible Philips and slotted screwdriver heads to give you four options in one handy pen-sized tool. With a Philips PH00 and PH01 and a conventional reversible slot driver in 1.5 and 3mm sizes, this is the ideal solution for all those fiddly jobs. Shop online at **http://shop.damar.biz**



## Anodised aluminium fuel regulator

**Price: from £95.45**

Webcon has a new range of anodised aluminium finish EFI regulators to complement the blue and red versions already available. Technically the same as the existing versions, they will be visually more appropriate to many engine bays. They are supplied complete with a mounting bracket and 8mm push-on unions, and range from 2.5bar to 4.5bar, or an option that is adjustable from 0-5bar. Available directly from Webcon and from appointed Webcon dealers, call 01932 787100 or visit **www.webcon.co.uk**



## K&N Filters **Price: various**

The MGB Hive have a large stock of K&N air filters at discounted and pre-increase prices, suitable for all MGs, 1275 and 1500cc Midgits and the MGC. K&N filters are a fit-and-forget solution that help improve the BHP of an engine, but do remember that richer needles may be required to make the most of the improved breathing and stop the resulting mixture running lean. Check out the MGB Hive's website at **www.mgbhive.co.uk** to see the current deals, and visit them at Marshalls Bank, Parson Drove, Wisbech Cambs PE13 4JE or call 01945 700500 for advice.



## MGC suspension bushes

**Price: £338.40**

Superflex has just announced a new polyurethane bush kit for the MGC. This comprehensive kit contains everything you need for the suspension, though you can also buy just the front or rear kit in isolation if you wish. Made in the UK using black polyurethane bushes and stainless steel inserts, this precision-made kit will sharpen up the handling without making it feel harsh. That's because each bush has been carefully rated to suit the job it has to do – they may all be black, but they are not all the same shore hardness. As Superflex say: 'To simply blanket a car with one hardness and call it comfort, dynamic, performance, race, road or touring leads to unacceptable compromises, reflects limited production capability and doesn't work. That's why our kits contain bushes that are each rated according to the particular task they have to perform.' Call 01749 673533 or visit [www.superflex.co.uk](http://www.superflex.co.uk) and look under the BMC listing.



## TF damper bushes

**Price: from £24.95**

Replacement lower damper bushes for the MG TF were not offered by MG-Rover, so failure required complete replacement of the damper assembly. Genuine new factory original damper assemblies are now unavailable anyway, but in many cases despite failure of the lower bush, the telescopic shock continues to provide acceptable damping control. MGOC Spares can now offer owners replacement metalastic lower bushes that just require press tool installation. Offered under part number H188 at £24.95 each, £47.50 in pairs (saving £2.40) or a set of four at £89.96 (saving £9.84) and inclusive of a replacement 10.9 grade shock absorber mounting bolt, to order call MGOC Spares on 01954 230928 or visit [www.mgocspares.co.uk](http://www.mgocspares.co.uk)



## Yokohama G.T. SPECIAL CLASSIC tyre

Yokohama has announced that it will launch sales in Europe of the G.T. SPECIAL CLASSIC in a revival of Yokohama's heritage G.T. SPECIAL brand. The new tyre is based on Yokohama's G.T. SPECIAL Y350, and delivers a soft, comfortable ride without losing the feel of a historical car and features the same classical tread pattern and side design of its predecessor. It will be available from this summer in three sizes – 165/80R15 87H, 175/80R14 88S and 165/80R14 85S. All make use of the latest tyre technology to enhance the drivability and safety of historic cars. See [www.yokohama.co.uk](http://www.yokohama.co.uk)



## Sealey's Spring promotion

Sealey launched their new 56-page Spring promotion on 1st March, packed with over 600 deals on their tools and equipment plus discounts up to 59% off list price. The promotion includes over 90 new lines, and there are 23 sections in total, including Hand Tools, Power & Lighting, Jacking & Lifting, Welding & Cutting, Motorcycle Tools, Janitorial, Vacs, Valeting & Pressure Washer sections. There are also Air & Vehicle Service Tools, Machine Shop, Parts Cleaning, Shot Blasting, Welding and loads more. Valid to the end of May 2019, copies of the Spring Promotion are available from your local stockist, or you can view or request a copy online at [www.sealey.co.uk](http://www.sealey.co.uk)

## Kent Cams new website

Kent Cams has recently launched a brand new website. You can search by vehicle or product type as well as part number; individual categories can also be searched including cam belts and chains, camshafts, followers and tappets, sprocket kits, oil pumps, pulleys and more. You can also find your nearest dealer worldwide and access the Kent Cams support team. Click to [www.kentcams.com](http://www.kentcams.com)



## The Boss ratchet

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Matador Tools might be a relatively new name to the UK, but they have been making some of Germany's finest chrome vanadium tools since the early 1900s.

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## MARCH 30

### LINCOLN AUTOJUMBLE

Helmwell, DN21 5TJ. No admission charge, just £2 per car for parking. 6.30am-12.30pm. [www.lincolnautojumble.com](http://www.lincolnautojumble.com)

## APRIL 6

### RUFFORTH AUTOJUMBLE

Rufforth Park, York YO23 3QH. Pitches start from £17. Sellers welcome 6-9am, doors open to buyers from 9am. Admission only £2 per person. 01904 738620, [www.rufforthautojumble.com](http://www.rufforthautojumble.com)

## APRIL 7

### MALVERN FESTIVAL OF TRANSPORT

Three Counties Showground, Wye Halls and outside, Malvern, Worcs WR13 6NW. 10am-3pm. Adult: £9, child (7-14) £3. 01484 667776, [www.classicshows.org](http://www.classicshows.org)

## APRIL 7

### BTCC ROUNDS 1-3

Brands Hatch, Kent. The 2019 season kicks off, with the two MG6s now being fielded by Excelr8 Motorsport. You can watch all the action live on ITV4 if you can't make it to the track. [www.btcc.net](http://www.btcc.net)

## APRIL 13

### UNDER THE BONNET

National Motor Museum, Beaulieu, Hampshire. Join museum manager and chief engineer Doug Hill from 7.30pm for an insight into some of the most extraordinary and iconic vehicles in the collection as he explains the remarkable engineering that makes each of these cars special. Tickets are £10 (or £7.50 for Friends of the National Motor Museum Trust) from [friends@beaulieu.co.uk](mailto:friends@beaulieu.co.uk) or 01590 614792.

## APRIL 14

### NEWARK AUTOJUMBLE

Newark Showground, Newark NG24 2NY. Early

bird admission from 8am £10, general admission from 10am £7. 01507 529593, [www.newarkautojumble.co.uk](http://www.newarkautojumble.co.uk)

## APRIL 15

### MGS ON TRACK

Cadwell Park, Louth, Lincolnshire. A beautiful setting for this technically interesting track where technique and nimble handling are just as important as raw power. [www.mgs-on-track.com](http://www.mgs-on-track.com)

## APRIL 21

### HUDDERSFIELD AUTO RETRO JUMBLE

Old Market Building, Brook Street, Huddersfield HD1 1DR. Stalls 7am, customers 10am. [www.phoenixfairs.jimdo.com](http://www.phoenixfairs.jimdo.com)

## APRIL 21-22

### EASTER MOTOR SHOW

Weston Park Near Telford, Shrops, TF11 8LE. Adult: £10 per day, children (4-16) £5, family (two adults and two children) £25. Open 10am-4pm. 01484 667776, [www.classicshows.org](http://www.classicshows.org)

## APRIL 27

### UNDER THE BONNET

National Motor Museum, Beaulieu, Hampshire. Another chance to enjoy an informative guided tour of the museum's magnificent machines and learn about the remarkable engineering that makes each of these cars special. Tickets are £10 (or £7.50 for Friends of the National Motor Museum Trust) from [friends@beaulieu.co.uk](mailto:friends@beaulieu.co.uk) or 01590 614792.

## APRIL 27

### LINCOLN AUTOJUMBLE

Helmwell, DN21 5TJ. The site is also near to an extensive antiques centre which is great for family members wanting something other than autojumble. No admission

charge, just £2 per car for parking. 6.30am-12.30pm. [www.lincolnautojumble.com](http://www.lincolnautojumble.com)

## APRIL 28

### BTCC ROUNDS 4-6

Donington Park. The BTCC circus moves to the popular circuit of Donington. You can watch all the action live on ITV4 if you can't make it to the track. [www.btcc.net](http://www.btcc.net)

## MAY 3-5

### DONINGTON HISTORIC FESTIVAL

Donington Park, Castle Donington, Derby, DE7 4BN. After seven very successful years the event is firmly established as a major fixture on the international historic racing calendar, attracting many thousands of spectators, hundreds of world-class historic racing cars and huge numbers of classic car club displays. [www.doningtonhistoric.com](http://www.doningtonhistoric.com)

## MAY 4

### RUFFORTH AUTOJUMBLE

Rufforth Park, York YO23 3QH. Pitches start from £17.

Sellers welcome from 6-9am, doors open to buyers from 9am. Admission only £2 per person. 01904 738620, [www.rufforthautojumble.com](http://www.rufforthautojumble.com)

## MAY 5-6

### NOTTS CLASSIC CAR AND MOTORCYCLE SHOW

Thoresby Park, Ollerton, Notts NG22 9EP. Adults £8 per day, children (7-14) £3. Open 10am-4pm. Sunday includes the East Midlands Ford Show, Monday includes the East Midlands Mini & VW Show. 01484 667776, [www.classicshows.org](http://www.classicshows.org)

## MAY 5

### BOWOOD SPRING CLASSIC CAR AND MOTORCYCLE SHOW

Bowood House, Calne, Wilts SN11 0LZ. the first of two classic vehicle shows at Bowood House in 2019. Adults £13, seniors (60+) £11, young adults (13-16) £11, juniors £10, children £8, family tickets available. 10am-4pm. 01484 667776, [www.classicshows.org](http://www.classicshows.org)

## Auction Calendar

**Mar 30:** EAMA, Copper Smith Way, Wymondham NR18 0WY. Tel: 01953 859180, [www.eama-norwich.co.uk](http://www.eama-norwich.co.uk)

**Apr 3:** H&H, online auction. Tel: 01925 210035, [www.handh.co.uk](http://www.handh.co.uk)

**Apr 10:** H&H, Pavilion Gardens, Buxton SK17 6BE. Tel: 01925 210035, [www.handh.co.uk](http://www.handh.co.uk)

**Apr 10:** Brightwells, Bicester Heritage, OX26 5HA. Tel: 01568 611122, [www.brightwells.com](http://www.brightwells.com)

**Apr 10:** Coys, Exmoor Hall, Bath & West Showground, BA4 6QN. Tel: 0208 614 7888, [www.coys.co.uk](http://www.coys.co.uk)

**Apr 13:** Anglia Car Auctions, Beveridge Way, King's Lynn PE30 4NB. Tel: 01553 771881, [www.angliacarauctions.co.uk](http://www.angliacarauctions.co.uk)

**Apr 26:** SWVA, 61 Ringwood Road, Parkstone, Poole, Dorset BH14 0RG. Tel: 01202 745466, [www.swva.co.uk](http://www.swva.co.uk)

**Apr 27:** Mathewsons, Thornton le Dale, N Yorks YO18 7LH. Tel: 01751 474455, [www.mathewsons.co.uk](http://www.mathewsons.co.uk)

**Apr 27:** Newark Motor Auctions, Winthorpe, NG24 2NY. Tel: 01636 671167, [www.newarkmotorauctions.co.uk](http://www.newarkmotorauctions.co.uk)

**Apr 28:** Ottervale, Kentisbeare Hall, Cullompton EX15 2AB. Tel: 07967 823897, [www.ottervaleclassiccarauktion.co.uk](http://www.ottervaleclassiccarauktion.co.uk)

**Apr 30:** Barons, Sandown Park, Esher KT10 9AJ. Tel: 023 8066 8413, [www.barons-auctions.com](http://www.barons-auctions.com)

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# Memories of pedal power

On page 48 of the February issue, Bruno Cianci wondered if the pedal car pictured was a Lines Brothers product. I can't answer this definitely from the small photo, but can only comment that the Lines Brothers (Tri-ang toys) did make a basic pedal car chassis in the 1930s which they bodied in the general shape of various then-current full size cars. I have seen photos of Vauxhall, Rolls-Royce, Daimler, Buick and MG 'silhouettes' (see also: *Children's Cars* by Paul Pennell, Shire Album 178).

I have vivid personal memories of my first 'car', a Tri-ang Magna No.8 pedal car (photo attached of the orange car with three year old me driving) which was made in the mid-1930s and was clearly modelled on the then-current MG F1 Magna. Tri-ang generally replicated the radiator grille of the car being modelled, but I can only surmise that MG would not allow this use of their trademark so my car's grille was of a generic design. The Tri-ang name of Magna does give a bit of a clue though, and I can't believe that Kimber would not have given permission for a good advert for his brand – in the 1930s only relatively wealthy people would have bought these cars for their children.

I was thrilled to see a super Magna at the Haynes Motor Museum in 2017, and it served to show that my memories of the one I had were correct. This car (pictured below) is actually dressed up with a Daimler grille, but is clearly the same body as mine. The staff kindly allowed me to have a close look, and the details brought the memories flooding back. I had a vague recollection of seeing another Tri-ang Magna pedal car in *MGE*, and found a reader's letter with a small picture on p26 of the July 2008



**ABOVE:** This pedal car in the Haynes Museum was modelled as a Daimler.



**ABOVE:** David pictured at the wheel of his pedal car and his TC – he's barely aged a day in the intervening 70 years!

issue. I think it also shows a Vauxhall bodied version, judging by the similar chrome side strips on the body. This MG version certainly has an MG grille, the lettering is quite clear, so Tri-ang must have eventually done a deal with Kimber.

I was clearly destined to become a car nut as, although I last saw my pedal car 60 years ago, I remember it in sufficient detail that I could build a replica today if I had the time. It had a moulded plywood body, wood 'chassis' members, pneumatic Dunlop tyres on proper wire wheels, front cycle guards which turned with the steered wheels, ball bearings on wheel hubs and pedal cranks (the big-ends!), a single external contracting band hand brake and a hand operated 'aaoooghaa' klaxon. I sold it for three quid around 1956 to buy bits for my bike, the first of many poor financial decisions in my life as I recently saw one advertised for sale at for AUS\$5000!

As rare as the Magnas are, the mechanical klaxon is even rarer. I have only ever seen one other photo of this klaxon on a car for sale. When I sold my pedal car, I gave the klaxon to a school friend to fit to his bike and was very pleased when we visited him in the UK in 2017 to be presented with it 60 odd years later! When my friend Geoff presented the klaxon to me, it literally brought a tear to my eye, reviving memories of my



**ABOVE:** The level of detail inside the Tri-ang pedal car is impressive; no wonder David loved the one he had.

grandfather who restored my car, and my dad who I scared by driving my car very fast around the playground of the school of which he was the headmaster.

The klaxon stirred such vivid childhood memories that I have fabricated a bracket to mount it onto my full size TC, but I only fit it for special occasions because I would be traumatised if it was stolen!

**David Selway-Hoskins**  
MGCC Geelong Librarian

## Zed survivors

I have been reading the news story in the March issue: *Save out Zeds*. I was able to trace the 50 ZS 180s which were sold in the Netherlands, and 48 are still on the road. Of all the Zeds sold in the Netherlands, 88% are still on the road, so there was nothing wrong with the build quality.

**Tony Verkley**

# Jobs you wish you could forget...

In the late 1960s I was having a lot of fun tuning my 848cc Mini and surprising a few people with the results. A colleague where I worked asked me if I could give my opinion on a Mini which his brother-in-law had bought cheaply as a runabout. When it arrived at my home after a 20 mile journey, it was clear something was seriously wrong with the engine – there was little oil pressure and the exhaust smoked like a two stroke engine.

Looking back I should have told him to take it back to the 'dealer,' but I did not. The Mini had obviously had a hard life with holes punched into the front of it to support driving lamps and a brake servo in the front passenger footwell. The body had been hand painted in a vivid orange colour. Further examination revealed it to be a 1071cc Cooper S.

A price for labour was agreed, and a few days later the engine and gearbox were removed from the car. The engine block was sent off for reconditioning, then rebuilt, reunited with the gearbox and installed. All of this work was carried out with the Mini elevated on home-made stands which just allowed a slim 23 year old to get underneath.

One of the fiddly jobs when working on Minis is re-attaching the exhaust

manifold to the cylinder head. Some of the brass nuts are positioned such that a combination of socket, ring and open ended spanners are needed to tighten them. During this part of the job, a socket dropped behind the engine and could not be located. We did not concern ourselves as we were sure to find it when we moved the Mini.

Finally the engine was back in, the car was lowered to the ground and pushed out of the garage for the start up. There was a single graunchy noise as the car was pushed onto the drive, and lo and behold there was the socket on the floor. The engine fired up quite quickly and the car was taken for a short run. We were really impressed with its performance, even at running in speeds. It was obvious that this was a different experience from an 848cc Mini.

Then we noticed a small pool of engine oil on the drive. Jacking up the car once again, the source of the oil leak was revealed. The errant socket had lodged in the coupling between the output shaft of the differential and the driveshaft to the front offside wheel. The graunchy noise we'd heard was the socket being forced into the rear of the gearbox, where it had formed a slight depression and created a 1in long

hairline crack.

There was only one course of action and that was to remove the engine and gearbox again. Anyone who has done that job can appreciate our mood. By a stroke of good fortune a workmate knew of a workshop that undertook aluminium welding and, despite it being a 60 mile trip, we were overjoyed when they succeeded in sealing the hairline crack. The engine and gearbox were then installed for the second time and I ran the car for a few days to check everything was OK.

At that time a standard Mini produced 34bhp with a top speed of 73mph. The 1071cc Cooper S we had refurbished seemed to have twice that power and would spin its front wheels on wet roads with little provocation. When the owner came to collect his car, we warned him to take it easy as the car he drove to us was markedly different from the car he would shortly drive home. We subsequently heard that he sold the Mini almost immediately because he found it intimidating to drive in town.

The moral of this sorry tale is that if something can possibly go wrong, then believe me it will at some time go wrong.

**Terry Graham**

## And another slight mishap...

When I left school, I became an apprentice at Jarvis of Wimbledon. At that time, all new cars sold were given a pre-delivery checkover. This involved checking oils, tyre pressures, wheel alignment, fitting number plates, a general check around and fitting any extras the customer had ordered.

I picked up a Minor 1000 from sales and drove into the workshop. I carried out the usual checks, and fitted a wing mirror to the offside wing as ordered by the customer. All was OK, except that the apprentice next to me also picked up a Minor 1000, the same colour as my one but his required two wing mirrors to be fitted. This he duly did, except he fitted one to the offside wing on his car, the other he fitted to the nearside wing of the car I was working on. Oops! We left the sales department to sort that one out.

**David Brown**

## The way it was

In the January issue's *Chequered Flag*, Andrew Roberts reflects on a time when driving was an art. He nostalgically recalls how we grew up using a manual gearstick and clutch pedal, remembering that the first gear on most cars was not synchromesh. Chances are Andrew even knows how to double de-clutch, as most of us do who were driving 50 years ago.

Andrew's reminiscences overlooked the fact that without self-parking wipers, with non-cancelling indicators, a demister that entailed cranking a handle to open the windscreen, no heated rear screen, static mirrors, floor operated main beam and semaphore trafficators, driving really was an art. However, despite the absence of much of today's technology, driving back then was also seen as a recreation. The Sunday drive after going to church always ended at a pub. We children were not allowed in licensed premises back

then, so it would be a packet of Smith's crisps with the little blue bag of salt and a bottle of Vimto, which we had to consume outside.

Nowadays a YB is a member of our family and of all of the technological advancements that have gone into cars since 1952 when our YB came off the production line, there's only one that I really miss – the design of the fuel filler neck on my car is such that you only know the tank is full when your shoes have petrol sloshed all over them. When it was new, of course, we bought our fuel in gallons and were served by an attendant, so our only inkling of a fuel splash would have been if we smelled it. But given the fact that our attendant would be busy cleaning the car's windscreen, dipping the oil, checking tyre pressures and the water level, all with a welcoming smile, it would just be a question of paying him and tipping him a couple of bob. I can't ever remember filling my own car back then.

**Robert Taylor**

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# GRAHAM ROBSON

**W**hen this column appears in the spring of 2019, it will emerge almost exactly 90 years after the first MG sports cars were being built at Abingdon. That's amazing to recall, I agree – especially as it also means that the last of the early-pedigree Midgets (the TC, that is) will be close to celebrating its 74th birthday, and that the traditional layout of MGs – simple ladder-style chassis frame with a beam front axle supported on half-elliptic leaf springs – was finally about to breathe its last.

Although the basic layout of the TC Midget was almost the same as that of the original 1929 M-Type Midget, I reckon that the only carryover part which was shared between the two models was the octagonal-styled badge itself. This means that between 1929 and 1949, that layout would have been subject to continuous change and (in almost every way) improvement.

In the recent past, too many ignorant people in too many noisy exchanges have suggested that this was always an old-fashioned way of designing and making cars. Even so, almost all those people (some of whom had an elevated opinion of themselves and their own standing in the world of motoring) forgot – or never even realised – that when it all began in 1929 this was still a state-of-the-art way of designing a two-seater sports car. In MG's case it sufficed to set up a tradition, to help build a reputation, and to make money – when Cecil Kimber was not tempted to spend the profits on motor racing.

And just to let a few statistics get in the way, I want to point out that in just 12 years from 1931 to 1949, (though we must never forget the six fallow years when the war stopped all private car building at Abingdon) MG built no fewer than 21,680 cars in the post M-Type Midget/Magnette series, all of which were based on that same simple type of ladder chassis frame. (I ought to make clear that this does not include the original M-Type Midget of 1929-1932 which used a different

chassis frame, one that was little more than a modified Morris Minor saloon frame.)

Not only that, but the structure lay hidden under at least a dozen models, some with several variations on the same theme, all backed by alphabetical titles ranging from C-Type (Montlhery) to TC. And according to the catalogues and worthy histories which have appeared, there were at least nine wheelbase lengths, with at least four different front track dimensions. All of these frames were designed and originally built in a mere five years from 1931 to 1936, which makes one marvel at the productivity of Hubert Charles' tiny engineering team.

It was that eminent MG historian, Wilson McComb, when describing the origins of the C-Type Montlhery Midget, who noted that its chassis had originally been inspired by that of the contemporary French 'Rally' sports car, and summarised this remarkable achievement by saying the following: *'Thus was evolved the basic chassis frame that was to remain in use on MG Midgets for nearly twenty years. It incorporated some unusual but highly effective features...'*

It was not Charles, however, who drew up all these different frames, but his associate Jack Daniels, who many years later told me: *'We had to be fast workers, because there was only Charles, Gibson, a new man called George Cooper and myself on drawing boards at Abingdon. I really became the specialist chassis draughtsman...'*

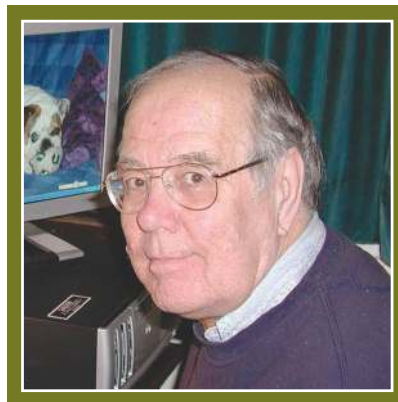
Jack carried out all the work of designing a derivative of the same basic frame, with pencil on paper, not to small-model scale but to full scale,

> Graham's first car was an MG TA, which he used whilst he was a graduate trainee at Jaguar Cars. He started writing about cars in 1961, joined *AUTOCAR* in 1965, became an independent automotive historian in 1972, and has since sampled every type of MG, ancient and modern. He has also published more than 160 books, and countless magazine articles.

and it seems that the very minimum of changes would be made from one frame layout to the next. That point was brought home by a study of the front axle track dimensions – 3ft 6in, 3ft 9in and 4ft 0in appear time and time again. In fact, Jack also confirmed that once the basic frame had been proven, then no further stress calculations (or, frankly, estimates) were ever made, and in fact that there was no time for such niceties to be tackled.

It was another noted design engineer (noted in the industry, that is), David Eley of Standard-Triumph, who once confirmed that the design of such frames was not an exact science, and could be completed very quickly indeed. 'Any fool', he told me, 'could design a steel frame. All he had to do was see what had worked well in the past, have a word with the frame supplier, and go from there.'

Wouldn't it be wonderful if evolving new kit was as easy these days? **GR**



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# ROGER PARKER

**L**ooking out of the window this February at blue sky, sunshine and record temperatures, the vagaries of British weather could not be better illustrated than by comparing this beautiful period of hood-down motoring weather with what we had exactly 12 months before, when what became known as the Beast from the East brought snow and sub-zero temperatures. However, what it does highlight is that there can be many great opportunities to drive our MGs in winter, so owners of cars that would normally sit under a cover in the garage until April miss out.

Speaking of April, remember that in the UK cars first used or registered during 1978 can be reclassified as Historic to benefit from the zero duty rate from 1st April 2019. Since taxing a Historic class car can only be done for a full 12 months and insurance is normally for a 12 month period as well, this means that when good weather appears in winter, the door is open for immediate and more enjoyable use of our classics.

This is also a good time to remind owners of over-wintered carburettor cars that float chambers will have been full of modern fuel when parked up, and that during storage the fuel will have evaporated and left non-volatile elements to set within float chambers and small fuel passages. These deposits do not readily dissolve when in contact with fresh fuel and are often the root of poor running after a lay-up, but there is a relatively simple solution that can be described as a carb 'spring clean.'

Importantly, I suggest that you do not switch the ignition on and let the fuel pump fill the float chambers. Instead, buy an aerosol of carburettor or choke cleaner spray with a plastic straw that sticks into the nozzle. Assuming the carbs are SUs, then remove the dashpots and pistons. Give all the exposed inner surfaces a quick spray and wipe, but the more important move is to insert the plastic straw into the top of each main jet and give a good three second spray. This will flush back into the float chamber,

which is why an empty chamber is better. Repeat a couple of minutes later, then remove the fuel lines feeding the float chambers and give a couple of seconds spray in through the float valves, (just the front carb on HIF carbs with impossible rear access). This should remove any residues, and on reassembly the engine should run cleanly, although it may be a little rough for the first few seconds as the residues and cleaning fluid are burnt and replaced by fresh fuel.

Moving on, how many of you remember VNUK? This is the case that was brought before the European Court of Justice in 2014 following a farm yard accident in Slovenia where Mr Vnuk was knocked off a ladder by a reversing tractor and trailer. The judgement based on current EU law stunned almost everyone in its seismic implications that every single vehicle (road and non-road types) would need to be continuously insured, anything from a Formula 1 car all the way down to a motorised bin, even if it was a rusting hulk. Such a monster of a decision could kill off so much of our motoring activity as insurance would be impossible to obtain or costs would be prohibitive, and all because of a careless tractor driver and open wording in law!

Well, now we have had the positive news that MEPs voted to introduce a series of amendments to the proposed new Motor Insurance Directive (MID) that covers the EU legislation in this area, and most importantly they have added clauses that will, if it is continued into law, minimise the effects of that VNUK court decision. The important aspects are in the new wording where it says: 'only vehicles used in traffic need third party

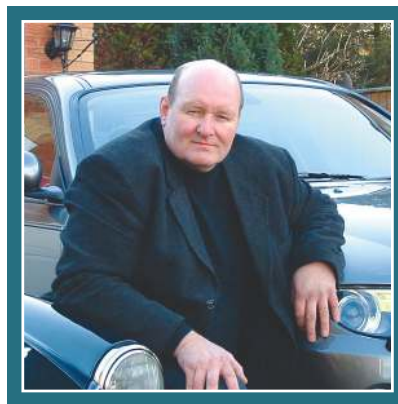
> Roger Parker is a former policeman whose technical skill and wide experience of MGs form the backbone of our own Technical Q&A pages.

insurance.' That separates the use of vehicles that are not used on roads to those that are, while 'dual use' vehicles, (for example vehicles that may be used for weekend motorsport but driven on the road at other times,) would only require insurance when being used 'in traffic.' Lastly there is the exemption for all vehicles used exclusively in a non-traffic environment that would include for example dedicated race vehicles.

However, there remains one quite significant hurdle to be overcome before this becomes EU law in that it all has to be agreed by the EU Council of Ministers later in 2019, so all those active participants involved in getting to this positive stage rightly warn that the job is not yet done and pressure still needs to be applied to EU governments to ensure these amendments are adopted.

Finally this month I would like to say, a very sincere thank you and fond farewell to our editor Simon who is moving on to new pastures. His tremendous stewardship of this publication over the last 13 years, (where has that time gone?), has raised it to the high position it currently occupies and I wish him every success with his new publication, *Classics Monthly*.

RP



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# JOHN NIKAS

**Z**ack Boatman wanted a classic roadster. Back in 1983, the English teacher had purchased a barely year-old Alfa Romeo Spider from the proverbial little old lady, with only 13 miles registered on the odometer. Rather than serving as a weekend runabout, Zack drove the car every day, amassing some 250,000 miles over the ensuing 27 years. When news arrived that a baby was on the way in 2010, however, the beloved red sports car was sold to help pay for all the things that come with a new child.

Over the past decade, Zack has been saving his pennies to facilitate the purchase of another convertible, but family emergencies always seemed to arise at the crucial moment, depleting the fund and setting his dream back further into the future. At last, with a few thousand dollars finally in the bank, Zack recently started to scan the classified adverts in Santa Fe, New Mexico for something inexpensive.

Thankfully, Zack has a friend named TG Mittler, a local enthusiast with an enviable motoring collection that includes a Ferrari 250 LWB California Spyder, Jaguar D-type and a Cunningham C2R that ran at the 24 Hours of Le Mans in 1951. With TG alongside him to examine potential candidates, Zack started his search in earnest, considering and checking out almost every cheap sports car in the state, but nothing seemed promising enough to justify an offer.

Then, while TG was away on business, Zack heard about a 1977 MGB in the local area. He immediately called his friend, who implored him to wait until both could inspect the car, warning him about Lucas electrics and bodies riddled with hidden rust. Displaying an impatience more typically seen in a high school student, Zack couldn't wait for his friend's return, heading out the door almost as soon as the conversation ended.

On first sight, it looked like a vehicle that had obviously been loved, displaying evidence that indicated indoor storage and an unworn, original interior. Uncertain whether

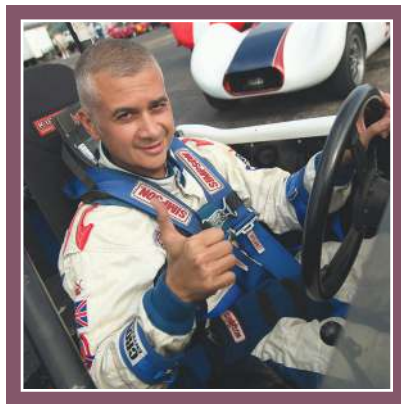
to pull the trigger, Zack started to walk away when the owner said the fateful words: 'Make me an offer.' Digging into his pocket, the teacher responded: 'I only have \$800 (about £500) in cash.' Surprisingly, the MGB's owner accepted the sum and Zack was soon driving a new sports car home to replace the long-lost Alfa Romeo.

I'm hearing this story from TG while we're seated around a table in the bar at the Ritz-Carlton hotel in Amelia Island, Florida, home of the annual concours d'elegance that marks the start of the American classic car season. TG related the proceedings with a broad smile across his freckled face, incredulous that anyone would buy a British sports car without some form of expert assistance. I lean forward and ask what the car was really like once the euphoria from its initial purchase had worn off.

'You wouldn't believe it,' TG said. 'Zack drove the car to my house and it looked fantastic. Under the bonnet were a pair of SU carburettors instead of the dual Zenith-Stromberg 175 CDSEs that were fitted when new. Those alone were worth what he paid, but the rest of the car was totally original and in great shape.'

After returning home, I called Zack who supplied the rest of the details. 'All the car needed was a new fuel pump,' he said. 'I took my daughter out for a drive this past weekend and she was not very excited at first, but as soon as we returned, she asked: "I get this car when I'm old enough to drive, right?" She was a total fan of the experience, grinning from ear to ear as the wind rushed through her hair.'

It thrills me to hear stories like this, providing me with hope that



**> Born into a family that cherished the Sacred Octagon, John has dedicated his life to British sports cars. He owns and races examples from various marques, has written numerous books and articles, and helped create the British Sports Car Hall of Fame.**

bargains still exist, given enough time and a little touch of luck. With so many examples of the MGB built, there are probably thousands of cars like Zack's out there waiting to be discovered. Although he had initially wanted another Alfa Romeo, Zack is an MG convert now, delighted at the little roadster's simplicity, lacking the Italian's complex petrol injection and twin overhead camshafts.

In many ways, an MGB is the perfect classic sports car – easy to maintain at home, with readily available, inexpensive parts and a driving experience equal to anything else on the market. Drop the hood, step on the accelerator, and the British roadster lacks nothing compared to an Alfa Romeo Spider or even more modern vehicles like the Mazda MX5. So now there's a new member of the MG fraternity out there in the New Mexican desert, proof that the marque's appeal remains universal. We welcome Zack to the brotherhood and look forward to seeing him on the road; maybe his daughter will even get her turn behind the wheel too. **JN**

“MY DAUGHTER WAS NOT VERY EXCITED AT FIRST, BUT AS SOON AS WE RETURNED HOME SHE ASKED: “I GET THIS CAR WHEN I'M OLD ENOUGH TO DRIVE, RIGHT?””



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# TRAIL BLAZERS

Mike Taylor talks to trail blazer Joy Parks about being one of the first WPCs to drive an MGB GT police car

**A**fter BMC launched the MGB GT at the 1965 London Motor Show, in their review *Autocar* magazine said of the Coupé that it '*makes friends right away through its good looks and the exceptional practicality of its body.*' These superior qualities were clearly not lost on the late Chief Constable Sir George Terry CBE CStJ QPM DL, who had a great affinity with the Police Traffic Division. One of the youngest to hold the post of Chief Constable, he arrived at East Sussex the same year as the GT was introduced and immediately set about implementing

a programme of modernizing reforms, improving communication systems and introducing motor scooters for women police officers. It was he who initiated the plan to include two of the elegant and dashing MGB GTs into the fleet of Traffic vehicles, arguably all done to enhance public awareness and create positive publicity.

A critical component in Terry's ideas was to add a degree of elegance and panache to his force; not only would the MGB GT play this part admirably, it would be crewed by a team of young head-turning female police officers kitted out in fashionable length skirts

and black driving boots as part of their uniforms. One of these ladies was Joy Parks. Here, she takes us back to how it all began.

'I was born and raised in Ashburnham and later lived in Catsfield near the historic East Sussex town of Battle,' explains Joy. 'As a youngster I was besotted with horses and dreamt one day of owning my own. But I quickly realized that some of those who owned horses were not my kind of people, and what's more the pay as a riding instructor and groom was dreadful.'

From a young age Joy says she always had a sense of authority and





although her brother worked on cars, her interest in motor vehicles was largely self generated. 'Interestingly, the person who taught me to drive was an ex-Police Officer and I quickly realised I really enjoyed driving,' she related. My first car was a sit-up-and-beg sidevalve Ford, which I bought locally for twelve shillings and sixpence. I then progressed to owning a Triumph Herald Coupé.'

The probation period on joining the police force was two years, which involved working with various divisions including CID, the control room and a period on Traffic Division. 'In 1967 the Chief Constable Sir George Terry decided to deploy two WPCs on Traffic, I saw it as a great opportunity and applied,' she continues. 'Hazel decided to transfer too, but before we were accepted we had to go out and drive the MG with a Traffic Sergeant to see how we handled the car. Naturally, in comparison to the Ford and the Herald it felt much faster and handled so much better. Once it was agreed that we'd join Traffic and before we went on any courses, we were mentored by one of the male officers.'

Joy and Hazel did their initial police training together at Ryton on Dunsmore near Coventry before moving on to their intermediate training in Yorkshire, returning to Coventry for their final instruction. They moved into the Traffic Division on the same day just as their probationary period was coming to an end in November 1967. This was followed by a month's driving course at the Kent Police Driving School in Maidstone. 'I was able to drive cars like Jaguar, Humber and Wolseley. Hazel and I both achieved a class 3 level pass, the highest possible grade on the course,' she says proudly.

From then on they were each crewed with a male officer until early in 1968, when they were subsumed into the

of right and wrong, coupled with a feeling of empathy with victims of crime and dishonesty. She also harboured a desire for wearing a uniform while helping people in such situations, so aged 18 she joined the police as a Special Constable. 'Wearing a uniform does give you a degree of confidence,' she continues. 'The Force is well disciplined, I am a very disciplined kind of person and thrived on thinking on my feet and dealing with issues as they arose. I was doing what I loved – being outside, meeting people and engaging with the public.'

Joy enjoyed her part time role so

much that in November 1965 she joined the police on probation as a full time officer. 'At the time there was a height regulation for women of 5ft 4in, and when I went to police headquarters to take my exams I was measured and found to be 5ft 3½in. However, they said I might grow and waived the restriction! In fact, the only thing against me joining up was that my father was not in favour, though I never asked him why.' Coincidentally, it was on that day in November that Joy was to meet up with Hazel Lane, who would become her crew mate in the MGB later.

Looking back, Joy says today that



« Sussex Constabulary based at Police HQ in Lewes. (The title changed again in 1974 when it became simply Sussex Police.) One incident she did experience while in training with a male colleague was responding to a car accident where the passenger had been thrown out of the car, still in her seat and wearing a safety belt. That was nasty.

Joy and Hazel's first MGB GT was a 1966 model, registration HPM 921D. 'It had a large steering wheel but no power steering and it was very heavy, but at that time we didn't know any different,' she recalls. 'Once we'd settled into the job we began to realize just how lucky we were – not many young girls of our age in those days got to drive an MGB.'



The car was remarkably standard in view of its role as a vehicle for Traffic duties, the only concession to its unusual task being the installation of a fog light fitted to the nearside of the front bumper and a wing mirror

attached to the offside front wing. In fact, as delivered to the Division the car had no roof-mounted POLICE display beacon, this device being specially designed later by Traffic Sergeant Frank Wren-Hanley together with the addition of two-tone reflective door panels. These additions were given the go-ahead by CC Terry and representatives from BMC, and became standard wear for all future Sussex MGB GTs so that other motorists could see when they were being followed!

The police MGB GT had to carry a full complement of Traffic 'tools', which included two Bardic Lamps, a fire extinguisher, two flashing warning lamps and casualty blankets, six road cones and various signs and other equipment as well as the original breathalyser unit. All had to be specially stored to fit into the B's restricted load area. What's more, with the exception of the shallow rear seat back rest there was no barrier to stop the load from tumbling forward under heavy braking.



**ABOVE:** Officers had to cram a lot of equipment into the back of the BGT, and owner John Parks has diligently collected the lot for his genuine ex-police example.

### BAP 886K

The ex-Police Traffic Division MGB GT used in our photos is owned by police car enthusiast John Parks. His mission to own an ex-Traffic Division MGB GT began in 1999 when he started creating a replica of OPM 64M, a 1974 model. He found a white '74 GT with Rostyle wheels and began collecting the additional components needed to equip the car, such as a radio, breathalyser equipment and so on, through visiting shows.

'However, in 2003 a serving Police Officer telephoned me to say that he had found an original ex-Police MGB GT, which was being advertised for sale in *Enjoying MG* magazine,' explains John. 'At the time I was very pleased with the replica police car I'd put together as it had an over-bored engine and black leather seats. Although I couldn't find any photos of the car for sale in service,

I did have illustrations of sister cars and the desire to own the real thing won; after a little negotiation, I bought it.'

Sadly, no sooner had John begun to drive it back to Hull from Brighton than he realized his mistake. 'It was awful; poor performance, very little oil pressure, and no overdrive. Someone had fitted a veneer dashboard, so the first thing I did was to remove the panel from the glovebox to check that it had two fixing holes to take the fleet number plate. The other tell-tale sign that it was a product of MG's Special Tuning was an ammeter fitted where the overdrive switch is normally located.'

Having bought the real thing, John moved many of the components across to it from the '74 replica. A couple of months after I bought the original, a friend and I fitted an overdrive gearbox and later another friend gave it a quick

respray. A week afterwards I attended Eastbourne 999 show, where few people realised it wasn't the replica that I'd displayed at previous events.'

Working for the NHS, John says he would generally offer assistance at road traffic accidents, although he's loathe to stop when he's driving BAP, his police MGB, in case people get the wrong idea. 'On one occasion I was on my way up the M18 motorway and about to join the eastbound carriageway of the M62 when I noticed a sports car jammed under the lefthand side barrier. I stopped, and while waiting for assistance the driver said: 'I saw a patch of water, spun a few times, hit the central reservation and ended up wedged on the near side. Finally, when my head had stopped spinning I spotted a 1970s police car backing up. I thought I'd time-travelled, just like in the TV show, *Life on Mars!*'



**ABOVE:** 1800ccs made the small MGB quite a performer by 1960s standards.  
**LEFT:** Extra communications gear had to be squeezed into the cramped cabin.

'During those early days with the MG we went on a number of photo shoots for the force and local media for publicity,' remembers Joy. 'We were also sent to various Traffic sections to show our faces. I think some of the male officers weren't sure about us appearing on their patch driving an MG. Those days were a little difficult with court appearances, but once we joined a specific Traffic department things improved. Following further training at Maidstone Driving School we qualified as Vehicle Examiners and were able to give expert evidence in court.'

In those far off non-PC days, perhaps because of their novelty value the pair did get the nicknames of the Petticoat Patrol and Sussex Dollies. However, despite these disparaging comments Joy and Hazel were still expected to react to any kind of call. Apart from road accidents and other motoring issues, these might also involve attending a crime scene where who knew what they might have to face on arrival.

Like the men, the WPC's shift pattern ran from 6am to 2pm, 2pm to 10pm, and the last extending from 6pm to 2am. 'On one occasion Hazel and I were out on patrol and got a report that a man was waving a knife at motorists in the Plumpton area. We were two girls with no back up, tasked to go and investigate. We found him, he was standing in the middle of the road with the knife behind his back and we had to force the knife from him. But as part of the training we had done self defence, so were able to take care of ourselves. In stark contrast, when I look at TV programmes

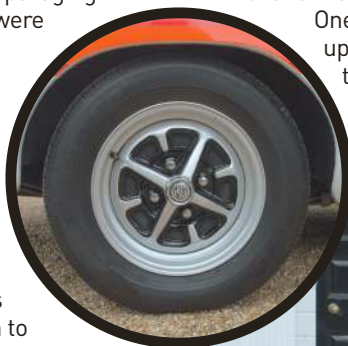
nowadays and see a similar situation, there's invariably a huge armed response.'

Reinforcing the point, Joy continues: 'If we'd had to deal with an incident, which meant that one of us had to go back to HQ to write a report, the other would go back out as a single crew, even up to 2am. On one occasion I was just about to go off shift when I was tasked with responding to a head-on collision just outside Lewes town centre. In those days you could ask members of the public to help by putting out traffic control signs. That was another instance when I was confronted with the 'Blimey, it's a woman' reaction. I found guns in the boot, and although they were legal I had to take them back to the station.'

One downside to spending up to eight hours behind the wheel of the MG was the driving position. 'The seats

could only be adjusted fore and aft, so I drove using a cushion. Also, the suspension on our MG wasn't stiffened until later, despite the amount of heavy equipment we carried. This became a problem when driving at speed over uneven ground when the exhaust often suffered. Also, with the added weight in the rear the MG could easily slide round in icy conditions.' MG's Special Tuning Department did make two upgrades – dim-dip lighting and fitting a calibrated speedometer. However, economies were made by the exclusion of head rests, heated rear window and carpets.

If their male colleagues thought that Joy and Hazel were excused the duties of looking after their sleek white police car, they were mistaken. Included in their duties were washing and polishing, and de-greasing the engine bay along with checking and maintaining tyres, and inspecting the battery for corrosion and the removal of verdigris and greasing terminals. »





« In mid-1968 Joy and Hazel were back at school to take their advanced driving course, where they both passed to class 1 standard, the first female drivers to achieve this impressive result in England. 'Among the things we learnt was to look ahead, to visualize what might happen and to carry out a running commentary all the time we were driving. It encouraged you to spot something that could occur in advance when driving at high speed. In fact, I still find myself doing it now. Having completed the course it gave us the confidence to know that we could drive the MG in any conditions at any speed.'

In fact, the MG wasn't the only car they drove. 'On occasions, perhaps when the MG was off the road in the workshops, we had the chance to drive a MkII Ford Cortina Lotus, a favourite of mine apart from the MG, and a MkIV Zephyr which had a tiny boot and a huge bonnet. It was a dreadful car, and used to wallow with all the added weight in the boot.'

That year the old timer, HPM 921D, (where is that car now?) was replaced and Joy and Hazel were presented with a brand new BGT off the production line, registration SPM 465G, and with it came the novelty of running-in the engine, driving it many miles in the process. This car featured twin spotlights, twin wing mirrors and reflective POLICE insignias on the doors. Later still BAP 885K joined the fleet. By then, and due to the success of WPCs on Traffic, the number of lady officers in the department had risen to something like 8-10.

'Had we not have been in Traffic, it's probable that as WPCs we would have



**ABOVE:** Light boxes and foglights were among the minimal extra equipment. The small rear seat was all that kept the police gear in the boot from flying forwards.

been tasked with dealing mainly with children and women, and those kind of jobs, which just weren't the same,' smiles Joy. 'I never dreaded going to work, no two days were the same.'

A few years after they had set up as a crew working out of Lewes, the pair were split up and Hazel mentored another WPC in Brighton while Joy was put with another WPC and remained at Lewes. 'Overall, my time with MGs lasted for six years,' says Joy, 'until I left the force in 1972.'


Spending up to 16 hours a day on the road, Police MGB GTs led a hard life, their time in the hands of the garage mechanics being increased because of their appetite for exhaust systems and other components caused by their low ride height and being driven toward the end of the performance envelope. As their odometers approached 80,000

miles they were auctioned off.

Looking back, was there anything about her time as a female driving a sports car in Traffic Division during the mid 1960s that Joy would alter, I wondered?

'There is definitely one thing,' she says firmly. 'I would not make it compulsory for women to wear a skirt. On one occasion there was a motorcyclist in a ditch and although I did climb down to help, wearing a skirt made it very difficult. Female Police Officers today don't know how lucky they are wearing trousers. On another occasion Hazel and I chased a stolen car near Lewes. We found it abandoned, and the driver had fled over a fence and down into woodland. There was no chance of chasing the culprit successfully wearing a skirt!'

Grasping the nature and value of two WPCs driving an MGB GT during the 1960s may well be difficult from this distance of time, and certainly it is all a far cry from today's 21st century policing culture. However, under CC Terry's leadership, some 47 MGs were deployed across East and West Sussex overall. This meant they were not crewed exclusively by WPCs. They were also run concurrently with an MGB GT V8 (GOF 88L) under assessment. While undoubtedly faster, this version still suffered from the same cramped cabin conditions of its smaller engined stablemates.

As for Joy and Hazel, they can look back with pride on being not only the first WPCs to drive an MGB GT, but for blazing a trail in the Traffic Division. 





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# A SOUND INVESTMENT

Would you spend over £30,000 restoring a car that only cost you £117 in the first place? The idea might sound like madness, but for Barrie and Sheila Hope it has proven to be money well spent. We'll let Barrie explain why.

**A**s a teenager, I always wanted an MG even though my father was a Vauxhall man. And surprisingly I wasn't lusting after something sporty like an MGA, but after a ZB Magnette. So when I graduated and got my first job in 1965, my father took me on a long Magnette hunt from our pit village of Horden to Chester-le-Street, Sunderland and Newcastle, then back to Hartlepool, Stockton and Middlesbrough. We finally located one in Middlesbrough, a two-tone blue 1958 Varitone, but by the time we spotted it in a showroom, the garage had closed for the night.

So I went back the next day and clinched the deal for £279, which seemed like a fortune at the time. Sheila and I got married a month later, and we drove up to the Lake District

in the Magnette for our honeymoon. Both of us loved the car from the very beginning, and it was our only transport for the next four years. We only sold it when a colleague at work said his neighbour had just inherited one that was in great condition. As our car was starting to show its age, I went to have a look. It was another 1958 ZB Varitone, but this time in Maroon and Beige. It had around 38,000 miles on the clock and the main sign of wear was some thinning of the paint where the previous owner had polished it to death! After much haggling, I beat the seller down from £120 – but only as far as £117 10s.

PJG 590 made its entrance onto our drive on 10th May 1969, the day before our son Peter was christened, and for the next five years it was our daily runabout. Unfortunately, in 1974 the car failed its MoT because of a small amount of corrosion on the front passenger footwell, caused by a small petrol leak loosening the underseal and allowing water to get in. As it was going to cost all of £25 to repair, I said to Sheila: 'Let's lay it up for a while and restore it some time.'

Little did I know then that 'some time' would be 33 years later – we've got





pictures of Peter in the car as a toddler, and now he is 50! In fact, the restoration very nearly never happened at all. In 2005 I had decided that we would sell the car, and whilst on holiday in Norfolk and Suffolk we went to a gathering of the MG Car Club's Magnette Register at the legendary Magnette couple, John and Lou Shorten, armed with pictures of our car to see if anyone would be interested in buying it.

Sheila thought this might be foolish, but my resolve was firm – PJG 590 would go to a good home. Fortunately there were some really nice Magnettes there which had been restored by John Shorten, and my resolve turned out not to be quite as firm as I had believed. In fact, it just seemed to evaporate. I don't think I even got the pictures out, but booked the Magnette in with John for a full restoration.

I had bought driver's side front and both rear wings plus front and rear doors in the late 1960s/early 1970s, paying something like £10 each, which today would be worth an absolute fortune. I'd also cut the bootlid out of a scrap car many years previously because ours had a ding in it, so we were off to a good start. And John is a genius at rebuilding Magnettes, so even though it looked a sorry mess to me after it had been blasted, he reckoned he had seen much worse.

While John was tackling the body, he sent the engine off to a local specialist, The Norwich Engine Centre, for rebuilding, with the cylinder head being converted for unleaded fuel. John did ask me if there were any other upgrades I wanted to make during the restoration, but I have power steering, power brakes and everything else on my modern

car, so told him I didn't want any of that on the Magnette.

Our only

concessions to modernity were to fit flashing orange rear indicators (when you rely on a flashing red brake light, people just think your light is on the blink) and inertia-reel seat belts front and back, plus later an electronic ignition when we got fed up with the points and condenser letting us down.

Mind you, I did wonder initially if we had done the right thing – the first time I drove it afterwards, I thought they had forgotten to connect up the brakes! The problem was that I'd not had a classic since taking the Magnette off the road back in 1974, and all the modern cars since then had spoiled me with their mod cons. If you move gradually every two or three years to a new car then you don't notice the changes so much, but if you go straight from a 2005 car to a 1958 one, it is a real shock.

Meanwhile, the paint – the original colours in cellulose rather than two-pack – had been done by Kevin Webb in Norfolk. It was a lot of money at £5000. »







**ABOVE AND RIGHT:** The original leather on the seats was thoroughly cleaned, nourished, repaired and recoloured at a fraction of the cost quoted for a full retrim.

« but this was never a project for the head (or wallet?) but always one for the heart. After all, for a car that cost around £1100 new and only £117.10s in 1969, a restoration cost north of £30,000 in 2007 takes some believing. When I worked for a living, my Chairman would have dismissed me for such a poor return on investment. However, neither Sheila nor I regret it, and so far we've had 12 years of pleasure – and still counting. Those years have included lots of social runs and a few adventures. We have done many single-day outings with the Tyne-Tees Centre of the MG Car Club, our original home region and after moving to Lincolnshire in 2013, we have

maintained that allegiance and return there every year to see old friends. It really is a good community with a shared love of classic cars.

The adventures have also been done with the MG Car Club, to the European Event of the Year which is held annually in a different country. We don't go every year, but first went to Spa in Belgium in 2011, covering just over 1000 miles, a total that was kept low by P&O Ferries taking us from Hull to Zeebrugge.

At Spa, we were getting ready for some circuits when a father and daughter whose MG had broken down asked if they could come along for the ride. That meant we were pretty heavily



laden, and on the first lap the cars in front were going so slowly that I had to drop down to second gear to get up the steepest hill. So the following lap I dropped back a bit and got up it in third. The next time I dropped well back, got up to 60mph and managed to reach the top in fourth. I also discovered that as race tracks don't have cambers like







catch the ferry just 45 minutes later.

Attempts to locate core plugs in Portsmouth for the next morning failed, so we had to make the rest of the journey home on the back of a recovery truck. The total trip had been about 1350 miles, but a good 210 miles of that were accomplished without the Magnette turning a wheel! Peter Martin of the Magnette Register quickly got a set of core plugs to me and a fix was duly achieved.

Closer to home, we have enjoyed many events in our native northeast, including the Nostalgia Weekend at Croft where you are requested to go in costume appropriate to the age of the car and Sheila won the 'Best Dressed Lady' award. However, our biggest adventure has been on another European jaunt, the one last year that took us to Switzerland. »

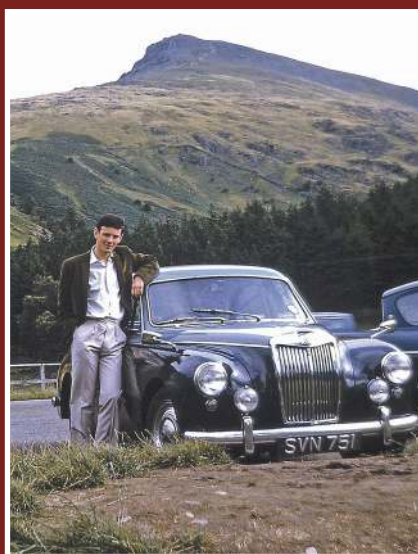
roads, you can get quite a dramatic wheel screech at modest speeds.

The next European event was to Aviemore, a splendid event put on by the Caledonian Centre. Ironically, getting there and back was a somewhat longer trip covering about 1200 miles over rather more up-and-down terrain than in Belgium, but again the car performed faultlessly, apart from the rear-view mirror snapping off in my hand.

A trip to Normandy was rather more eventful. As on previous trips, we travelled with our friends Maurice and Christine Standish. This time they were in their beautiful MG WA, which

coincidentally is also in this very issue of *MG Enthusiast*. (We just don't seem to be able to get away from them...!) Apart from the EEOTY itself, we added more time and visited Rouen, Montreuil and then Deauville. Unfortunately, the trip was not to end without incident. On the way home, and only about 10 minutes from the port, a head of steam temporarily obscured the road ahead. Yes, a core plug had exited the block. It would have been an easy repair if we'd had a replacement, which of course we didn't. Fortunately my insurance provider, Adrian Flux, were superb and got me recovered to the port in time to

## FAMILY PHOTOGRAPHS



**ABOVE:** On honeymoon in Barrie and Sheila's first Magnette; Best Dressed Lady at Croft Nostalgia; son Peter in the Magnette in 1969; taking granddaughter Molly to her Prom; fantastic send off by neighbours as the adventure to Switzerland begins.



## Magnette

« Before setting off for this, I noticed some moisture around the core plug at the back of the block, the one you can't replace with the engine in-situ because there is not enough room to swing a hammer. So I got Hall's Garage, (who have become my local specialist after we moved to the area,) to fit a full set of core plugs. It cost me £415 – probably about a fiver for each of the easy ones, and £400 for the awkward one that needed the engine to come out, but we went away feeling much more confident. We got a gala send off too when neighbours lined the drive with bunting and flags to wish us well on our adventure, and either the core plugs or the send-off did the trick because the car performed flawlessly throughout the 2030 miles, despite temperatures rarely dropping below 35°C.

We had got the Magnette back from its resurrection in 2007 as a running car, but with no interior trim other than the driver's seat. Sheila and I had refitted the interior, including a new headlining, and I can honestly say that in fitting the headlining we both achieved body articulations we had not achieved for years. However, although the seats were in quite a state, I had been quoted £4000-£5000 for a full re-trim and we decided we could live with them for a while. That while lasted for 10 years, and we only got them properly sorted in 2017. What happened was that we'd met the Leather Repair Company from Hull at MG Live in 2017, and they reckoned they could repair what we had. Best of all they only quoted £500 for the front seats and £350 for the back.

What they did was to take the whole seat cover off, and where the leather was badly split and you could slide a hand inside, they glued equivalent leather on from



**ABOVE AND LEFT:** Barrie and Sheila specified the bare minimum of mod cons, so the mechanical spec is still 1489cc and four gears.

behind, then glued the original leather back down. There was a lot of work that went into it first though, cleaning and softening the leather.


They replaced some of the stitching that had gone too. I must say I had been sceptical, but it is brilliant – it just looks like it has been very well looked after from new, whereas in fact it spent decades up in our loft unfed and uncared for. And of course there were some places where the leather had never seen the light, so they were able to colour it back to the original shade.

I mentioned earlier the shock of getting back behind the wheel of the Magnette after such a long gap, but of course that didn't last long and I soon got used to it. Modern cars can make you smile, but the Magnette makes you grin. On motorways it can get

frustrating though, because while I can travel at the same speed as other cars, I can't stop at the same speed. Therefore I try to leave a decent gap between me and the car in front, but somebody always nips into the space!

Often people see the Magnette and say: 'They don't build them like they used to,' to which I reply: 'Thank God!' Although I wouldn't swap it for anything (except maybe a million quid), I wouldn't want it now to be our only car, there are just too many other people on the road to contend with. However, I love driving the car, and the grandchildren love it too. There are so many things to remember about the journeys we have made and the places we have seen, but one constant wherever we go is the reaction of other people to the car. They are always coming over and striking up a conversation, which is so nice. When you get all this, who could begrudge the money it cost? I reckon even my old

Chairman would be having second thoughts by now.

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# A TF tour of SPAIN

Regular contributor Aubrey Pavard is back, but this time he has swapped his pre-war MGs for a modern TF – and brought three more couples with him from Australia for a tour of Spain.



**T**his story begins when four TFs met in Portsmouth to begin a tour of Spain and France. The tour, which would last 25 days, was to be an expanded version of an earlier tour undertaken in an MG PA (documented in the April 2016 edition of *MGE*) which was confined to the western Pyrenees. On the earlier tour I had been impressed by the good condition of the mountain roads, which the little 847cc PA found rather demanding and much time was spent grinding up steep slopes

in second gear. It was readily apparent, however, that a modern F or TF would handle the slopes easily, while also providing much driving pleasure. So on my return to Melbourne my wife Rene and I floated the idea of an F/TF based tour, and three couples signed up to the idea: Allan and Pam Fabry, Ian and Pam Prior and Wayne and Jenny Hunter.

Planning began with a study of the roads, accommodation and attractions. Importantly, the tour was to combine great roads with as much of the history,

culture and cuisine of the regions as possible given the time constraints. Spain has seen many invaders, but the Iberians and Celts of northern Spain, aided by mountainous terrain and ingenuity, essentially kept them at bay, preserving their cultures, cuisines and languages. As such the north is composed of seven distinct regions, and the route planned would encompass all of them – from Catalonia in the east through Aragon, Rioja, Navarra, the Basque Country, Cantabria, Asturias and Galicia in the west, plus a side trip to the principality of Andorra. So it was fairly ambitious, but promised to be a fascinating trip for a group from an island continent where few cultural differences exist despite separations of several thousands of miles.

Selection of roads and routes was based on information from the 2015 trip, a rapid reconnaissance tour of the western Pyrenees undertaken in a hire car in 2017, and prior knowledge of northern Spain based on work carried out there as a geologist in the mid-1980s. Motorways were avoided, except for a fairly extended run on the splendid coastal A8 with its great views, viaducts and tunnels. Wherever possible daily driving time was limited to five



*The 14th century plaza in the Santillana del Mar town centre.*





**ABOVE:** 8th century church in the ancient Cantabrian village of Santillana del Mar.

del Mar. With its 14th and 15th century buildings and plazas, cobblestoned streets, 8th century church and excellent restaurants and tapas bars, this provides an excellent introduction to 'old' Spain.

We turned south and west the following day towards the Picos de Europa on route N621. No sooner had we entered the beautiful valley of the Deva River, and just as we were beginning to enjoy the scenery and high-speed corners, than we were met by a road closure and a detour up a steep, narrow track, which was sealed but poorly maintained. After some 30 miles of hairpin bends, potholes and bumps we once again emerged onto the N621, only to find after a few miles that there was yet another detour due to rock falls, which was twice as long as the first and again on narrow, secondary village roads. This occasioned a quick council of war and re-examination of our maps, which resulted in the decision to retrace our steps and take the AS114 to the north of the Picos instead of N621 to the south as originally planned.

As a result of our peregrinations, we arrived late at our overnight stop in the rather isolated village of Campo de Caso, where we found our little country hotel locked and deserted. Eventually, after waiting for some time, we managed to locate the lady owner with the assistance of the barman from the local pub. She returned to the hotel quite unconcerned and informed us that she had completely forgotten about our booking. Fortunately, rooms were available and after checking in she directed us to a modest little bar in the village. The owner/

barman, somewhat overwhelmed by the unannounced appearance of eight 'gringos' on his doorstep, welcomed us but asked us to wait for a moment while he checked his larder to see if he had enough food to feed us. Satisfied that he had, he seated us and informed us that the specials of the day were steak and fabada (a white bean and pork stew that is an Asturian staple). Both proved excellent, the steak particularly so.

We were intrigued. Where did a small restaurant in the middle of nowhere source its supplies, particularly meat? The owner informed us that it was all locally sourced and that the steak had actually come from his father-in-law's herd just a short way up the hill behind the restaurant – a classic example of local is best!

The next day we continued westwards through the high Pyrenees. By confining ourselves to the less used secondary roads we were able to exercise our TFs through the mountains and valleys while enjoying the wonderful scenery. Over the next few days we revelled in steep inclines and hairpin turns in

»



**ABOVE:** The Salime reservoir was constructed in the 1950s and was one of the largest hydropower projects in Europe at the time.

hours, allowing for leisurely breakfasts, lunches, photo stops and exploring at the end of the day. Travel arrangements were completed by the end of 2017, three low mileage TFs were ordered from Just Right Autos in Witney in late 2017, and my TF (which I'd purchased a year earlier) was checked and serviced. Everything was in place by early 2018.

We travelled separately to the UK, collected our cars and met in Portsmouth for the ferry to Santander. After a rest day in Santander in a vain attempt to combat jet-lag after the trip from Melbourne, we made the short 27-mile hop to our first overnight stop: the ancient Cantabrian village of Santillana







**ABOVE:** A country lane in Galicia.

« the mountain passes, broad sweeping high-speed turns in the river valleys and spectacular views of the snowy mountain peaks, broad green valleys and picturesque villages as we chucked our TFs about the Asturian Pyrenees. The cars behaved and the weather was fine, allowing top-down motoring which added to our delight.

All too soon we had to leave the mountains and descend into the wide, rolling Galician countryside, where our route took us roughly parallel to the Camino de Santiago, or in English the Way of St James. Walking this has become extremely popular, and we encountered people of all races and persuasions walking by (and occasionally crossing) the road without any consideration of vehicular traffic. One supposes they consider themselves under the protection of St James and therefore invulnerable.

Santiago is the capital of Galicia, with a 10th century cathedral, a 15th century



*The Santander seafront.*

university and innumerable 15th to 16th century buildings, all well preserved and maintained. One cannot walk through the city without encountering a musician playing the bagpipes, a traditional Galician instrument and indicative of a link between the Celtic tribes of Spain and northern Britain. We spent a rest day here, wandering through the city streets and plazas, visiting the tourist traps and sampling the tapas, cider and wines – happy pursuits, but worthy of far more time than we had available. From Santiago we headed north to the coast, and from there on the new A8 highway to Bilbao with an overnight stop in Aviles, an important port and industrial centre.

In Australia we are limited to 100km/h on most of our roads, even on some of our freeways, and consequently I was delighted to be able to stretch the TF160

a little on the A8, particularly since it seems nobody in Spain takes any notice of the 120km/h speed limit. Not wanting to hold up the traffic, I happily joined the Spaniards. I am not a lover of highways, but the A8 is quite different to most with the Pyrenees on the right (with green, vegetated mountainsides rising from the roadside, giving way every so often to snow covered, craggy peaks) and on the left the Bay of Biscay with fishing villages scattered along the coast at inlets and natural harbours. Spectacular views were enhanced by the many impressive viaducts and tunnels in the steep-sided valleys, all of this taken at speeds that would have resulted in a suspended licence in my nanny homeland of Oz.

Like most visitors to Bilbao, we made the obligatory visit to the Guggenheim Museum. Almost without exception we



**1:** Street scene in Santiago de Compostela. **2:** The four TFs ready to leave the hotel in Santander. **3:** Jeff Koon's 'Puppy' sculpture constructed with thousands of flowers and displayed by the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao. **4:** Some of the amazing scenery encountered. **5:** A 200+ year old Eucalypt framing the cathedral in Santiago. **6:** Accommodation in old mill buildings in Galicia.





**ABOVE:** Early morning photo op of Picos de Europa. From L to R: Jenny Hunter, Pam Prior (kneeling for photo), Wayne Hunter, Allan Fabry, Ian Prior, Rene Pavard.



**ABOVE:** The impressive viaduct on the A8 across the Ribadeo river mouth.

came away impressed by the building, but somewhat nonplussed by the exhibits. One, a large, bed sheet-sized painting with irregular black blobs on a white background, had us wondering, until we discovered it had been made by the artist pouring black paint on a white sheet and having a naked lady roll around on it. Interesting, but one got the impression that most people would have preferred to have seen the lady rather than the spotty bed sheet!

From Bilbao, we headed across the coastal range to the plain of the Ebro, skirting the industrial centre of Pamplona to the truly ancient town of Sos del Rey Catolico. The town of Sos was established in 907 as a border stronghold of the kingdom of Aragon and is the birthplace of Ferdinand II of Aragon who, together with Isabel of Castile, drove the Moors out of Spain in 1492. Today the town exists as a cultural centre and a small tourist attraction. It hosts many 14th century buildings and a Roman era church, which has spectacular, well preserved frescos in an underground crypt.

After two days in Bilbao and a day in Sos, we were culturally replete and so we headed into the Pyrenees once more to explore the mountain roads. We were not disappointed. The roads were eminently driveable, well maintained, with little traffic and spectacular scenery. We became quite used to traversing several mountain passes before lunch, the four TFs travelling in loose formation, now and then stopping for the obligatory photo opportunity.

Two days driving saw us in Andorra. We arrived at our hotel without incident, but when we went to start my TF it balked and we had to push it. Apparently the battery was flat. Once in the car

park it started easily with the assistance of a jumper lead from Allan's TF. The alternator light on the dash extinguished indicating that the alternator was charging, but when the car again refused to start after a good period of running the engine, we assumed the battery was faulty. A new battery was acquired and installed, and the car started easily. Job done, we relaxed and enjoyed the town and its restaurants.

The next day, a Saturday, we set off westwards back into the Pyrenees on a more southerly route on less frequented and more rural roads. Gradients were steeper, turns tighter and bitumen narrower, but they were, nevertheless, every bit as interesting and enjoyable to drive as those of previous days. We were thoroughly enjoying ourselves when, well into the mountains and without warning, the charge light on my car lit up.

This was not good, as we were miles

from anywhere on a minor road on a Spanish weekend. On earlier MGs the alternator or dynamo is accessed by raising the bonnet, a simple one-minute operation, but in the TF the car has to be jacked up and the right rear wheel removed. This gives access to the alternator belt and permits cursory inspection of the offending part. However, to do a thorough inspection or to remove the alternator, one needs to unclip the hood, remove the heavy insulation, and undo ten bolts to remove the engine inspection panel behind the seats, not something one should attempt on a mountain road with half the car protruding into the traffic. This considered, I decided to press on to the village of Tremp, which lay 20km distant.

We arrived in Tremp, a rural farming community, just before midday, found an auto-electrician but were told he was closing in five minutes and would not be open again until Monday. Disappointed, I drove to a side street and started jacking the right rear so that I could check belt »



**ABOVE:** Roadside maintenance : Allan and Ian examine an offending brake light switch with Pam Prior standing by, a very minor glitch and one of few problems.





**ABOVE:** Enjoying a lunch stop at a quiet layby in the Somiedo National Park.

« and connections. Halfway through this process, the auto-electrician turned up and told us to drive the car back to his shop where we could use his hoist. My faith in Spanish hospitality restored, I drove back and got the car in the air. Belt and connections were good, so it had to be the alternator. Faced with being stuck in Tremp until Monday, we decided to press on. The auto-electrician, noting that the battery was down to just over 11 volts, kindly offered to give it a quick half-hour boost. This done, we set off for Barbastro, a much larger town some 62 miles distant, in the hopes that we might find some after-hours assistance there.

I was unsure how far the TF would go on battery alone as just about every ancillary is electrically operated – ECU, fuel pump, power steering, water pump, all the instruments and more – so it was a gamble! In the event we made it, but only just. Within ten miles of Barbastro, the rev counter stopped working. Then a few miles further on the power steering died, to be promptly followed by the speedometer and finally, on the outskirts of town, the engine. I started looking for


the emergency number to call for a tow truck, but my Aussie friends had another idea. Allan Fabry had been following me since we left Andorra, and was keeping the other two cars informed by phone as they moved ahead of us. Ian pointed out that we had three good alternators between four cars, and therefore by swapping batteries every 60 miles or so, we should be able to keep my car on the road until Monday when we would be in Logroño, a major centre.

Four battery changes later, an overnight stop and a much appreciative yours truly, we rolled into Logroño. There, through the kind offices of our wine tour operator, the car was taken away by a somewhat apprehensive auto-electrician unfamiliar with the TF and having never driven a righthand drive car. While we toured the Rioja wine district the car was worked on, and when we returned to the city it had been repaired – a new alternator sourced, installed and tested. The garage owner had given the car preference over his other jobs, illustrating once again the kindness and hospitality offered freely in Spain.

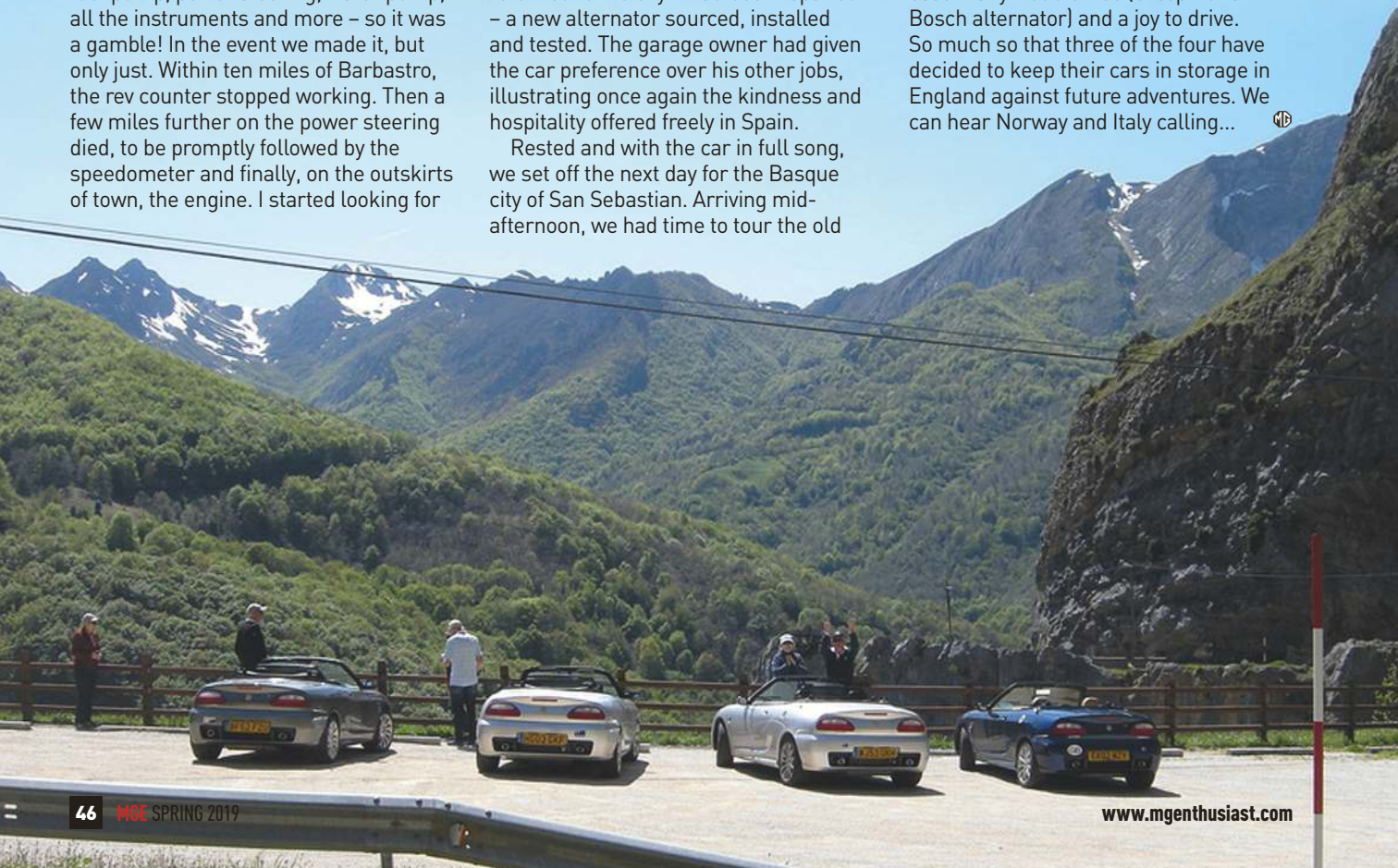
Rested and with the car in full song, we set off the next day for the Basque city of San Sebastian. Arriving mid-afternoon, we had time to tour the old

city with its fascinating history and enjoy the delicious and varied snacks called pinchos. If there is ever a next time, I would most definitely allow an additional day in San Sebastian because it is a gem!

The next five days were spent in France, with overnight stops near Bordeaux, in Angouleme, at Le Mans and the port of St Malo, where two cars boarded ferries and the remaining two headed north, further into France. The highlight of the French trip was the 24 Hour test day at the Le Mans circuit where we spent a full day watching the action and visiting the splendid museum.

Four couples, all from Melbourne, in cars of at least 12 years old had covered 2800 leisurely miles through some of the most impressive scenery in Europe, while enjoying the exposure to different cuisines and culture. The cars were essentially trouble free (except for a Bosch alternator) and a joy to drive. So much so that three of the four have decided to keep their cars in storage in England against future adventures. We can hear Norway and Italy calling... 

*View of pits and start/finish at Le Mans with an LMP1 prototype on track.*





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# MODERN MGS

In the February issue, we met Peter Bramble and his £150 MGF. This issue we return to Rugby to see two other cars in the Bramble household, ones that were also bargains, though not quite on the same scale!



## Lesley Bramble and her MG3

I drove Seat Ibizas for 20 years before getting my first MG3. At the time I felt in the mood for a change, but initially I thought the MG3 was a bit boxy for me. I prefer something that is a bit more sleek and curvy, but the finance deal with 0% interest persuaded me take a closer look, and MG Coventry were also offering three years' free servicing, which made it a great deal.

We went to the dealership, and they had a lovely red car with a black roof in the showroom, top of the range with the leather interior. This was on a 16-plate. I had a test drive and while it didn't blow me away, it was OK. I think it took me a while to get used to a new model; having had nothing but Seat Ibizas for



the previous 20 years, things like the movement of the gearstick on the MG did not come naturally to me and I kept crunching the gears.

However, I bought one and kept it for two years. We knew there was a new model coming out in 2018, and when it arrived I thought I'd go and take a look. I don't really know why I was tempting myself, I suppose I was just interested to see what it was like. If it had only been slightly tweaked then I would have kept my old car, but it was very different, and all the new features are in my mind for the better.

I liked the exterior styling. The dash

is a lot nicer too, with the big screen. I didn't think the tartan pattern on the dash went well with the red car in the showroom, but it goes much better with a white car. The layout of the buttons is better too, much more user-friendly. Especially for Pete with his big fingers – now that MG have gone from tiny buttons to normal dials, he doesn't press more than one at the same time.

I had a test drive of the facelift model, and this time I was impressed because it was so noticeably different to drive. The gears were much smoother and not so clunky from the off. Somehow it just felt a lighter, easier drive all round,







*Lesley thought originally that the MG3 was too boxy for her tastes, but the little MG hatchback has grown on her.*

like you didn't have to work it so hard and it just wanted to go. It does feel like it has more torque, despite what the figures say, and I feel certain that the new one goes up hills more willingly. I'm not sure how much of that can be put down to the individual cars I've had, perhaps one being in optimal tune and the other being a Friday afternoon car, but the new MG3 is a real pleasure to drive. I reckon it is better than my Seat, and I really liked that!

I bought a top of the range model, and it feels more upmarket than the old interior with lots of nice chrome accents. The old one was alright, but this feels higher quality. Perhaps the only change I would make is to add a little colour to the exterior, not one of the graphic packs which I think are too much, but maybe just something like red mirror covers.



**ABOVE:** Lesley was impressed enough with the updated cabin of the new MG3 to trade in her old-style model for one. She feels the new car performs better, too.



### Peter Bramble and his MG6

I used to have a Kia Sedona that was great for racing because it could carry everything we needed and still tow the MGB, but we had to take all the seats out of the back to create enough room. So then I saw this MG6 for sale at the Longbridge showroom. It was an ex-demonstrator and it had a tow bar, which was just what I needed. It is a 2011 car, and I bought it in May 2012 with just under 2000 miles on the clock. It is petrol-engined, the basic S spec, but all I really miss is the cruise control. The satnav was never that brilliant on

»





**ABOVE:** Generous carrying capacity was always a strong point of the MG6.

« the higher spec cars and I have my own unit anyway, so that is no loss.

The N-series engine in the MG6 is essentially a K-series unit, one which I am well used to from my MGFs, but it performs well even in such a big car. On a motorway you can just leave it in fifth and if you need to nip ahead, then a simple poke of the throttle is all that's required. And if I am behaving myself, I can get 40mpg. It will even do 30mpg with all our gear and the race car on the back, so long as I am not running late. It isn't bothered by the weight either, even on some lengthy hauls. We have put bigger brakes on the front though, ones from the ZT190, as we



**ABOVE:** N-series engine is a great work horse, but then so was the K-series.




**ABOVE:** Some interiors date quickly, but we reckon that the MG6 cabin gets better looking with age. Peter says it is a comfortable place to be for the long haul, too.

were worried about getting brake fade at times when towing.

I paid £11,500 for the car, which was about two thirds of the list price, and I got a decent rate of interest on the finance from MG too. I've now had it five years and done 46,000 miles and I think it is brilliant. The MG6 is a great long-distance car. I took mine to the Le Mans Classic soon after buying it, and it has been back twice more since, and also to Spa for their classic. The great advantage over the MGF is the amount of alcohol you can bring back in a 6.

I reckon the only reason the MG6 wasn't a bigger seller at the time was

because they didn't push it. You see more MGs about now, but nobody ever really knew about the MG6 despite the publicity from the BTCC campaigns. It probably didn't help that saloon cars have gone a bit out of fashion these days and everybody wants SUVs. I have had a look at the ZS and GS, but they are not really sporty enough for me. I think I will just keep the MG6 until it dies, though it is as good as new now. If they brought out a new MG6 then I'd have a look, but if not then I will just keep this. It does everything we need – it is quick, handles well and swallows everything we can throw at it. 



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# A mammoth undertaking

Ten SA chassis and two of the larger WA were imported into Switzerland before the war and bodied locally to the importer's own specification. As you can imagine, survivors are few and far between, so this fan decided to build his own replica. As you do...

STORY AND PICTURES: SIMON GOLDSWORTHY



**I**n the early days of motoring, few vehicle manufacturers produced complete cars and customers could not simply walk into a showroom and drive out in a finished car. Instead they had to buy a rolling chassis from the vehicle manufacturer and then commission a coachbuilder to create a body for it.

It did not take vehicle manufacturers long to realise that they could make more money from selling complete cars, but bespoke coachwork remained an option throughout the pre-war era. Larger coachbuilders would also buy batches of chassis themselves and offer finished cars to their own design, manufacturing them in quantity to help

reduce the overall cost. Alternatively they could produce their own basic body style, then tweak it to fit various chassis.

However, coachbuilding declined markedly after WW2, largely because of the switch from separate chassis to monocoque construction and the increasing value for money the big players were able to offer through mass production. By the 1950s it had largely been confined to the luxury end of the market, plus occasional special bodied ventures aimed at offering more creature comforts to an existing sporty package such as the Arnolt TDs and later the Innocenti Midgets.

The car in our pictures clearly takes us back to the 1930s though, a time

when coachbuilders were still able to make a living. Underneath that gloriously flowing body sits a substantial MG WA chassis with its equally substantial 2561cc six-cylinder engine. Chassis number 0417, it was built on 7th February 1939 and exported new to Malawi in Africa. The factory offered the WA in three versions: a saloon that was built in-house, and two versions that were contracted out – an open Tourer built by Charlesworth in Coventry and a Tickford Drophead Coupé built by Salmons and Sons of Newport Pagnell – but there are no details on the factory paperwork to show what colour this example was, or even what body it wore.

In fact, much of the car's past remains





something of a mystery. What we do know is that by 2000 it had made its way to South Africa and was being offered for sale. Or rather, what remained of it was being offered for sale because little more survived than a rolling chassis with the steel bulkhead, bonnet, radiator shell and front wings attached.

Coincidentally, this would have been pretty much how MG dispatched chassis to coachbuilders back in the day, both at home and abroad. For many of those foreign sales, the idea of fitting a body that was built locally had serious advantages when it came to import rules, regulations and – crucially – taxes and duties. That was certainly the case for MG's Swiss importer, Sportscar AG

of Zurich, managed by a gentleman called J H Keller. Between 1936 and 1939, as well as a handful of built-up saloons, the Swiss company imported 12 SVW chassis to be bodied locally – nine SAs (which was the predecessor to the car in our pictures), one VA which was similar in style but smaller and powered by a 1548cc four-cylinder engine, and two of the mighty WAs.

Keller chose Reinbolt and Christe of Basel to body the imported chassis, and they obliged with style and flair. In fact, what became generally known as the Keller MGs were so attractive that MG enthusiast Maurice Standish decided he had to have one. The only problem, of course, was that they were always

extremely rare and time has only made that situation worse. However, Maurice is rather more determined than your average enthusiast and he decided that if he couldn't buy an original, then he could certainly build a replica.

Now, it won't have taken the genius of Hercule Poirot to make a connection between the rolling chassis being offered for sale in South Africa and the idea of building a replica Keller WA. The route from South Africa to Maurice's garage was not a direct one though, as the vehicle's remains were initially bought by Gary Perry, who is Registrar of the MGCC's SVW Register.

The yarns he was spun by the vendor included a claim that the car had once »





**ABOVE AND RIGHT:** *The WA was famous for being covered in octagons, but don't the dials look superb?*

« belonged to Lord Aylesbury. Gary was able to debunk that myth by writing to the late Lord's grandson, explaining that the car may have belonged to his grandfather and wondering if the family could tell him anything about it. The reply was both charming and succinct, a handwritten letter saying: 'If only! My grandfather was devoted to a much-derided car, the Trojan, although to pacify my grandmother he also had a Humber Snipe with a chauffeur.'

So its early days remain something of a blank, which is surprising on a car this rare because you might expect it to have



left more of a trail. Allegedly somebody had attempted to fit a 1950s Citroën body to it while in South Africa, but that has not been confirmed or disproved. Where we start to get on firmer ground is from 27th December 2001, when it was imported back into the UK. It was listed on the import paperwork as a

scrap vehicle, and described as: 'Vehicle in very poor condition and incomplete.'

For the next few years, it sat in a container in the UK waiting for Gary to get stuck into the project. However, as so often happens, his plans had changed by 2007 when Maurice re-enters the story. As outlined earlier, Maurice



**ABOVE:** *The total number of MG octagon emblems on the WA was boosted by several design touches under the bonnet. The centralised greasing points are present on the fire wall, but they have not been connected up on this car.*





**ABOVE:** The engine in the WA was a substantial 2561cc straight six OHV unit. Power was quoted as 95.5bhp @ 4400rpm, and the RAC horsepower rating was 19.82.



was intent on building a replica Keller MG and had been on the lookout for a suitable SA chassis. At the time he was Chairman of the Tyne Tees Centre, and while attending the club's Council meeting, mentioned that he was looking for an SA in poor condition.

'This guy said he knew where there was a WA chassis in that sort of condition, and introduced me to Gary who was also at the meeting,' recalls Maurice. 'To cut a long story short, I bought the remains of the WA from him and went to collect it in late 2007. The car was 100% complete mechanically, while the chassis had surface rust but no holes at all. I think what must have happened to the bodywork was that termites got to the wood. The front bulkhead, bonnet and front wings were there, but they were steel.'

Perhaps this would be a good time to explain a little of Maurice's background, and how he had got to this stage of MG madness. In the past he has raced MGs and had some fast machinery in the shape of MGAs and MGBs, but he also developed a passion for 1930s styling. Among a number of other MGs, at one point he bought a J1 with the intention of restoring it, but sold that on when an ND became available – with a four year old son and a one year old daughter, Maurice and his wife Christine realised that the J-Type was not ideal, whereas the ND had a luggage shelf over the back axle that could be turned into a seat for the children.

Eventually the children outgrew their makeshift perch, and so the ND was replaced by a four-seat VA Tourer. Then Maurice saw pictures of a Keller-bodied



SA in a book, *The Magic of MG* by Mike Allison. It was love at first sight, the lines on the Swiss car looking so much more graceful to Maurice's eyes than the rather sit-up-and-beg proportions of the factory offerings. And while you and I might be daunted by the prospect of creating a new body from scratch, the idea did not faze Maurice because, to revive a phrase from a 1980s ad by the AA that drove everyone mad at the time, he knows a man who can.

In fact, he knew two men who could! The first was Peter Radcliffe of SVW Spares in Hull. Peter had restored a genuine Keller-bodied SA, a car which now resides in the USA, and so had all the templates he needed to recreate the ash framing. The WA had the same track at the front, but was a few inches wider at the back, so the rear of the SA's frame just had to be stretched a little to fit Maurice's running gear.

With the basic shape mapped out and the structure formed, the car was then taken to Geoff Henderson, a craftsman who'd previously rebuilt bodies on two of Maurice's MGs, a VA and a P-Type. Geoff was about to retire, but still had time to shape the panels for this beautiful car as his professional swan song.

'The colour we originally chose for it was Rover Westminster Blue,' says Maurice, 'because Christine had owned a Jaguar painted in that and we thought it would suit the MG. But when we saw it out in daylight for the first time after being painted, we knew right away that it was far too light and did not look right on this car. So rather than take it home, we simply rolled it back into the workshop and asked them to paint it again in a different colour! This time we chose Rolls Royce Midnight Blue, and that suits it perfectly.'

Meanwhile, Maurice had more

»



« than enough work to keep him out of mischief. The engine was fairly straightforward to rebuild, not least because he has built plenty of engines over the years and there was nothing tricky about this design. 'I think the engine had only done 40,000 miles,' he says. 'The bores were a little worn, but I couldn't get +10thou pistons so had to bore it out +20thou. The main bearings were reground to -10thou, but the big ends were fine and were replaced with new standard size bearings.'

The dash and the dials were with the car. The dash was in pretty good condition, but Maurice had it French polished to match all the other bits of wood he'd had made for the interior. The gauges were sent off for restoration, Maurice choosing to have their rims fully chromed rather than leaving the inner edges blued as per the factory because he thinks it looks better.

The car came back from the paint shop in 2013, but was then packed off to the trim shop for a new interior. It returned from them on Boxing Day 2013, though there was still an awful lot of fitting up to be done. Maurice cracked on, and by September 2014 it was ready for its first run out. And Maurice's initial impression? 'I thought I must have been crazy to have done it all!' he laughs. 'It was very pre-war, and though I have had pre-war cars in the past, this one really was very heavy.'

Christine was not too impressed on her first outing, either. That occurred in April 2015 when they took it up to Scotland for a VSCC event. 'The windows didn't seal up very well at that time, so we had to stop in B&Q and buy some plastic sheeting to cover the hood overnight,' she recalls. 'The wind then got up in the night and the



**ABOVE: Maurice and Christine have recreated a beautiful piece of MG history, but this WA is now for sale.**



plastic scuffed the wings, so that had to be polished back out later. At least we saved the brand new and very expensive leather interior, though.'

However, it is fair to say that these initial teething problems have now been ironed out, and the big MG has been taken further and further afield. The couple even took their WA down to Switzerland for the European Event of the Year last year. Maurice says: 'The car does wander a little bit, but it lightens up at speed. If you are brave enough it is supposed to do 90mph according to the book, but I find that at 60mph it is really quite pleasant. And if you have the

top down, you don't get nearly so much engine noise. It can get a bit hot in the cabin though, especially with the roof up.

'The suspension is actually pretty comfortable. It is on cart axles so it will crash if you hit a large bump or pothole, but on a decent road it is very smooth. The brakes are surprisingly good – 14in drums on the WA up from the SA's 12in. There is no power assistance of course, but they are split front to back for a little added safety. The gearbox is good too; I rebuilt that with new synchromesh on second, third and fourth, so it is nice to use. It is a very torquey engine, but I also fitted a special higher ratio diff from Peter. This makes for better cruising, but does mean that I have to change down a little sooner on hills where it might otherwise have cruised up in top.'

I have to say I am full of admiration for what Maurice has achieved with this car, and for the ambition with which he approached the mammoth task of creating it. To my mind the Keller WA encapsulates all the grace and glamour of the 1930s, but with just enough Swiss restraint to stop it becoming flashy or vulgar. And yes, there is a very real distinction to be made between what is glamorous and what is flashy!

I am sure few of us could ever have had the vision to bring about its creation, but fortunately now we don't have to. That's because Maurice and Christine are looking to downsize, so the WA is up for sale. It has been valued at £125,000 by the SVW Register, so if you have the funds and the desire, give Maurice a call on 07763 131708 or email [m.standish521@btinternet.com](mailto:m.standish521@btinternet.com). Of course, you could wait for a Swiss-built original to come along, but if you do, we wouldn't advise holding your breath! 



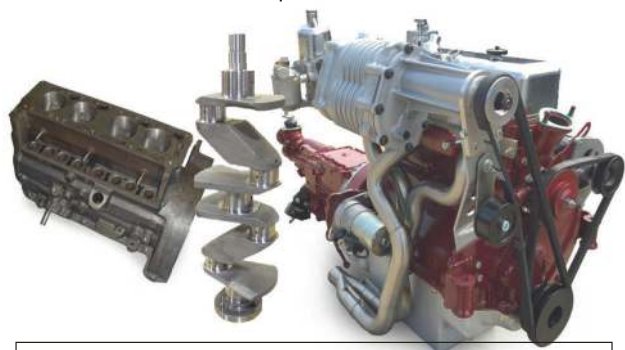


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# Tri-ang Minic MGA

**F**ew toy companies have been more innovative than Tri-ang, but that doesn't mean all of their products were successful. Having noted the popularity of Dinky, Corgi and Matchbox cars, Tri-ang launched a rival diecast range in 1959 called Spot-On. Even though the models were well-made and built to a constant scale, they were too expensive and the range never really caught on. Similarly, Minic Motorways were a clever attempt to adapt the slot-car principle to a civilian setting, and even offered road/rail links with Tri-ang OO gauge train sets, yet the system never approached the success of Scalextric.

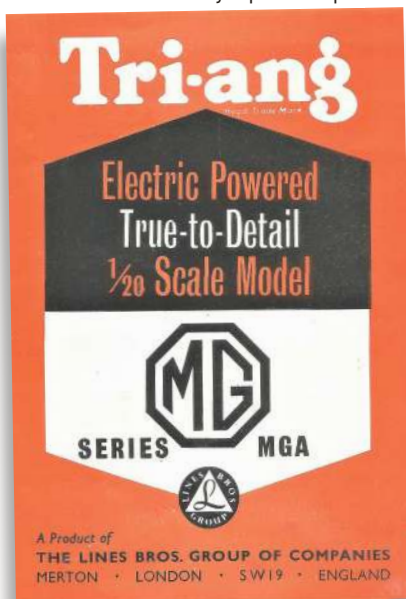
1/20th scale battery-operated plastic-

bodied cars were yet another Tri-ang idea that failed to generate healthy sales. These were not in fact an original concept as a rival firm, Victory Industries, had been offering something similar since 1949. Victory had modelled early 1950s cars like the Morris Minor, Standard Ten and Austin Somerset whereas the new Tri-ang range offered more modern subjects when it appeared nearly a decade later, such as the Austin FX4 taxi, Ford Zephyr MkII, Triumph Herald and Ford Anglia. However, by then the popularity of this kind of toy had declined and Victory Industries were putting more effort into their VIP Raceway slot-car system in an (ultimately unsuccessful) attempt to rival Tri-ang's much more popular Scalextric.

The principle of the battery-powered car was simple enough: insert two torch batteries into a space under the car, switch on the motor and watch it zoom off. The front wheels could be turned, but once the car set off, there wasn't much you could do to control it and it generally ended up hitting the nearest piece of furniture or skirting board. One solution was to put the batteries inside a control box and link this to the car via a cable, giving the operator more control. This feature was seen on many Hong Kong-made plastic toy cars of the era, but only appeared on a few Minics




**ABOVE:** These 1/20 scale models were accurately modelled on the real thing and beautifully proportioned.



towards the end of production.

But none of that affects the collector today who is – presumably – not going to play with the model but simply put it on display. And there can be few better centrepieces for a cabinet of MG models than the Tri-ang MGA. Being an open convertible, the front wheels could be steered using the steering wheel, and the forward/reverse mechanism was ingeniously operated from the centrally positioned gear lever. Victory had already brought out their own version of the MGA in 1956, but there's no doubt that the Tri-ang is not only more detailed, but also captures the shape better, especially at the front. Available colours include cream (red seats), red (cream seats) and light blue (cream seats). Tri-ang even advertised a quirky accessory pack to go with it. Described as the Honeymoon Set, it contained male and female figures to sit in the cockpit, a boot rack and luggage, a 'just married' sticker and an old shoe to dangle from the back of the car as the couple drove off into the sunset!

In spite of all the effort put into them, these beautiful models were simply too fragile and too expensive to succeed as children's toys. In 1960 they cost about 35 shillings (£1.75) each, a sum which would buy you up to ten Dinky Toys. After barely four years Tri-ang decided to cut their losses, abandon the 1/20th scale Minics and concentrate on Scalextric which brought in far bigger profits. 



**ABOVE:** Big torch batteries were housed in this opening underneath the model. Once it was set in motion, all the operator could do was watch it go!



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## TD and TF



Welcome to our special feature exploring what it is like to own and drive the many and varied two-seater sports cars built by MG since 1949.

• REPORT BY: ROB HAWKINS

MG's range of post-war two-seater sports cars arguably includes the most varied assortment of delectable yet affordable cars from any manufacturer over the last seven decades. There are traditional pre-war-style roadsters such as the TD and TF right up to the modern mid-engine MGF and TF, and in between there's everything from a humble Midget to an eight-cylinder RV8. Whilst the classic car market has

boomed and prices rocketed, many MGs are still affordable and a good potential investment, not to mention great fun to drive. Whether you own one or more of the MGs outlined over the following pages or none of them at all, the information concerning each model's history, what they are like to drive, what problems to expect and modifications that can be made should enable you to dream and speculate.



**ABOVE:** The TF looked lower and sleeker than the more traditionally upright TD (top).

**T**he TC Midget of 1945 technically qualifies as a post-war MG sports car, but since that was so lightly modified from the pre-war TB, we are going to start with the TD Midget that succeeded it in 1949. The TD's steel chassis originated from the Y-Type, but was modified so that the rear chassis rails swept over the live axle, helping to provide more travel for the rear leaf springs. Modern components when compared to previous iterations of the T-Type line included lever arm dampers, rack and pinion steering (including a LHD version) and coil springs for the front suspension. The road wheels were four inches smaller in diameter than the TC's 19in dinner plates, and wire wheels were discarded in favour of solid steels. Although smaller wheels were fitted, the TD was five inches wider than the TC and used wider 5.5in tyres. By 1952 however, wire wheels became an optional extra.

With all-round hydraulically operated drum brakes, modern suspension and the option of ordering a heater and a radio, the TD was a step up in sports car ownership. The engine remained the same as that fitted to the TC,





namely the 1250cc XPAG with overhead valves and four cylinders inside a cast iron engine block topped off with a cast iron cylinder head. At first it produced a modest 54bhp, which may not sound a lot but is actually quite respectable considering the 1275cc A-series nearly two decades later only produced around 65bhp in standard tune.

The XPAG engine was revised in 1951 with a new engine block, sump, bell-housing, flywheel and a larger clutch. The engine number prefix was changed to TD2, and TDs with this engine have become known as TD2 models. These are not to be confused with the TD Mark II (also known as the TD Competition model) on which the XPAG engine's power output had increased by 3bhp courtesy of larger valves, a higher compression ratio and larger twin SUs. Suspension on the Mark II was firmer thanks to the addition of friction dampers alongside the hydraulic units, but this did improve the handling too. Optional extras on the TD included higher ratios for the rear axle and a supercharger conversion.

TD sales reached 30,000 in total



**ABOVE:** The TF had octagonal gauges positioned centrally in the dashboard.

throughout its four-year production run, before modern sports cars such as the Triumph TR2 and Austin Healey 100-4 started to erode buyers' confidence in the older looking TD with its pre-war flared wings and running boards. One last attempt to keep the model alive arrived in 1953 in the form

of the TF, essentially a facelifted TD with a revised front end, front wings and rear. On the TF a pair of bucket seats replaced the TD's single seat back with separate seat bases. Under the skin the mechanical components remained the same, but in September 1954 a larger 1466cc version of the XPAG was fitted

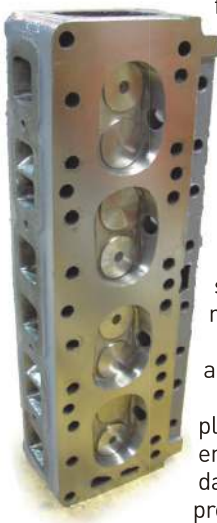
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## Jobs and costs

Due to the age of the TD and TF, there is generally a huge divide in condition and forecasted running costs. Cars that have been restored or well looked after should only require maintenance costs. Few are daily drivers, so estimate that annual servicing should cost less than £100 for engine oil and a filter, spark plugs and the biennial replacement of brake fluid and coolant. However, there are a number of common problems to be wary of. One of the XPAG engine's weak spots is its rear main oil seal, which is actually a scroll rather than a proper seal and invariably leaks. An uprated rear oil seal kit is available for around £200, but fitting will add considerably to costs and the rear main bearing cap will require machining.

Valve stem oil seals can harden, especially if the vehicle is rarely used. New seals are not expensive, but a check and skim of the cylinder head along with a new gasket can see the final bill turn into a low three-figure sum. However, Mike Green at NTG points out that he has found many people fit the oil seals incorrectly, down on the valve stem, when they should be located underneath the valve cotters.

'My unleaded heads [pictured right - Ed] are unique as we manufacture our own guides that are modified to accept a modern valve stem seal, making them far superior to the original O-ring design,' comments Peter Edney. 'We also carry out some porting to the inlet ports to improve the gas flow, creating a smoother idle and better torque throughout the rev range.'



Early TDs had a clutch cable that was prone to friction problems, whereas later TDs and the TF used a rod instead. An adjustable clutch rod from Moss for £50 is a worthwhile upgrade for all these models, because it helps to eliminate problems associated with wear to the clutch face, flywheel, release bearing and gear linkage.

Tatty TDs and TFs may require a thorough overhaul in many areas, but perhaps the biggest problem concerns the ash framework that supports the body. Even a TD or TF in seemingly good condition can be blighted with a rotten ash frame. Replacement framework is available from several specialists and individual pieces cost as little as £50, but a full main body timber kit will cost £2700, while a built-up body tub with doors is £9000. And if you think you can get away with replacing a single piece, remember that the work involved in stripping down the bodywork, removing the rotten woodwork and replacing it will be very time-consuming, and steel panels that have been prised off will not always fit straight back on. And because these cars were assembled selectively at the factory, both new and secondhand replacements will invariably need fettling to fit.

The chassis itself can suffer from damage, rust and previous repairs. On the TD and TF the entire side rails were boxed in, and this is the most likely place to find rust. It can generally be patched easily enough though, and twisting or kinks from accident damage is likely to be a bigger (ie more expensive!) problem.



# Post-War MG Sports Cars

« (labelled XPEG), which produced 63bhp and more importantly to most drivers provided 17% more torque. Known as the TF 1500, the model lasted until April 1955 when MG was finally allowed to compete with the likes of the Austin Healey and launch the modern-looking MGA. TF production figures show 9602 were manufactured, making the total for TD and TF a little under 40,000.

If you're looking to buy a TD or a TF, then you'll probably need around £10,000 just to buy a restoration project. Should you want a car that's ready to use then allow up to £20k, rising to over £30k for some of the very best.

## Modifications

The TD and TF modification market evolved during the cars' production life, with upgrades that ranged from little luxuries up to the extremes of a supercharger conversion. These cars were raced, so performance upgrades within the rules and regulations were in demand. Nowadays, the modification market for the TD and TF appears to have taken a different direction whereby modernisation and longevity are generally seen to be more desirable.

An electronic ignition conversion is a good starting point for better reliability. Prices vary greatly from around £100 (NTG recommend the Powerspark conversion for £96, which sits inside a standard distributor). Engine servicing can be made easier by replacing the traditional canister style oil filter with a spin-on type – budget for around £100 from the likes of Moss, NTG and other specialists. These conversion kits vary in what you get for your money. NTG's adapter for the early TD, for instance,



consists of a spin-on filter that's housed inside an original looking canister and costs £127.20.

The XPAG's cast iron cylinder head can be converted to run on unleaded fuel by fitting hardened valve seats, which costs around £400 if converted by a specialist (excluding fitting), or just over £200 for the parts from the likes of Peter Edney and NTG (a machine shop will still need to be paid to complete this conversion unless you have an extremely well equipped workshop and the necessary skills).

Cylinder head modifications

are a good way to improve engine performance. Mike Green at NTG recommends having the cylinder head ported and gas flowed, fitting TF-size valves to earlier heads and increasing the compression ratio.

The dynamo can be replaced for a later alternator, retaining the original positive earth system or changing to negative earth. The wiring must be capable of withstanding the additional current generated by the alternator – harness specialists such as Autosparks can supply uprated wiring. An authentic looking Dynator, which is built to resemble a dynamo but is actually an alternator, costs around £250 from the likes of Peter Edney.

Twin SU carburettors were fitted to all TDs and TFs. The Mark II TD and TF had twin 1.5in SUs whereas all earlier T-Types had twin 1.25in carburettors, so a popular upgrade on any engine with 1.25in SUs is to fit a pair of larger 1.5in carburettors. Aftermarket air filters can be fitted too along with varying sizes of ram pipes, which can help to provide additional performance or complement other modifications.

A supercharger conversion is one of the ultimate period modifications, but should only be fitted if the engine is in good working order and has a suitable compression ratio (around 8.3:1) and displacement. Steve Baker's supercharger conversion kit costs



**ABOVE:** The XPAG is a brilliant engine, but rebuild costs can be surprisingly high.



'We are now getting a lot better torque curve, a lot more power and an oil-tight engine,' comments Peter Edney on his engine development of the XPAG (pictured here). 'Our fast road engine at £4500 will rev to 6000rpm and produces 80bhp, which is nearly double the original. If you add a supercharger we're hitting 100bhp, and the car is still useable in modern traffic.'

Camshafts and Vernier timing gear are available for the XPAG; budget for up to £500 for the two. Stainless-steel manifolds can aid airflow, with the exhaust side costing around £700 from Peter Edney and the inlet being around £250, while a stainless-steel exhaust system costs around £200 including mounts and gaskets.

Another approach to making a TD or TF feel more spirited is to change the axle ratio. Factory upgrades included a 4.5:1 final drive ratio, which may knock the top speed down but makes for livelier acceleration. NTG sell such a kit, including shims and washers, for £274.80.

However, the most popular gearing-related modification is the Ford Type

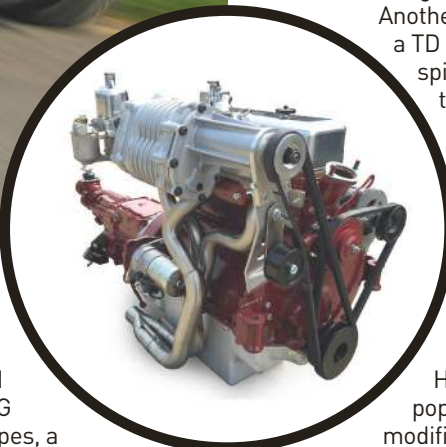
9 gearbox conversion, which can be fitted to the XPAG 1250 and XPEG 1500 engines using an adaptor kit. Conversion kits start at around £1200, which includes a cast alloy bell housing, clutch plate, spigot bush, chrome gear lever, propshaft, speedo cable and mounting brackets. Expect to pay around another £200 for a used Ford Type 9 gearbox, or £1000 for a reconditioned unit.

Inside a TD or TF, seat belts or harnesses can be added for around £40 each, but there are no mounting points, so spreader plates may need to be used. Steve Baker sells a reproduction GPS-based speedometer and electronic tachometer for £525 each.

As for the suspension, Brown and Gammons sell a strengthened swivel pin and trunnion set for the TD and TF, which is manufactured in the UK and

£3300 and includes a new Eaton M45 or M62 blower that has been modified to fit onto the XPAG engine in the T-Types, a rebuilt 1.5in SU carburettor and all the necessary manifolds, ancillaries and gaskets. Steve recommends further modifications, such as a camshaft upgrade (£325) with a longer exhaust duration to get the most out of forced induction. Supercharger conversions are also available from other XPAG and MG specialists such as Andy King, Peter Edney and Moss using a more modern pop-off or sneeze valve and a different inlet manifold.

If supercharging is a step too far, the 1250cc XPAG engine can be bored out to a maximum of 1350cc on its standard crankshaft, while a longer stroke crankshaft can result in 1466-1470cc. Peter Edney, Andy King and Brown & Gammons are some of the specialists who can build a modified XPAG engine. Expect to pay from upwards of £4500.



**“A SUPERCHARGER IS ONE OF THE ULTIMATE PERIOD MODIFICATIONS BUT SHOULD ONLY BE FITTED IF THE ENGINE IS IN GOOD ORDER”**

## Modifications



**ABOVE:** Adaptor kits can be used to convert cars running on steel wheels to popular but demanding wires.



**ABOVE:** Disc brakes can also be fitted. This is NTG's kit; it retails for £738 (steel) or £814 (wire wheels).



**ABOVE:** A modern spin-on oil filter can be hidden inside a housing to keep the look of the original canister.

costs £510 for a set. They're not only stronger than OE components, but enable later MGB lever arm dampers to be fitted, which cost around £80 each whereas reconditioned OE lever arm dampers cost £122 each.

Competition brake shoes cost £131 from Brown and Gammons (£59.40 if you send your old competition shoes to them). A remote servo can be fitted and will cost around £150. NTG have recently launched a front brake disc conversion, which uses MGB calipers and brake pads along with a new hub. Budget for £700-£800, depending on whether steel wheels or wires are fitted. They also offer a wire wheel conversion for £888 (wheels extra).



# Post-War MG Sports Cars



## « Driving impressions

The TD was a revelation when it was launched, thanks to the independent front suspension with separate coil springs and lever arm dampers that gave the sports car a superior ride quality when compared to more traditional leaf springs. The fluid feel of the suspension provides all the feedback you need under cornering, which feels fast for a classic car but slow by modern motoring standards. Unlike previous T-Types, synchromesh on the upper three ratios meant there was no longer any need to pump the clutch pedal when changing down a gear, although first gear needs the car to be stationary or double-declutching before you can ease it in.

The XPAG engine in the TD and TF doesn't benefit from high revs, so a modest 3-4000rpm is sufficient before a gear change is required. Fortunately though, it's quite a torquey engine, capable of steadily climbing hills without the need for gear changes down the 'box or high revs.

Being a moderately lightweight car (the TD weighs in at 876kg whereas the TF is quoted at a heavier 912kg), acceleration feels quite lively. By modern car standards it is not that impressive with the TD taking 23.5 seconds to reach 60mph from stationary and the TF 1500 needing 16.3 seconds, but this isn't the point of such a car. Instead, the lack of refinement combined with the appeal of open top motoring makes it all the more exciting.

Patience and mechanical sympathy are two essential ingredients required to drive a standard TD or TF. Providing the novelty value doesn't wear off, driving a sports car from the 1940s or 1950s that's now over 70 years old should never be less than memorable. Just make sure you leave plenty of

space for braking, especially after jumping out of a massively servo'd and over-braked modern car. Another aspect of driving a standard TD or TF that needs some adjustment is the lack of seat belts and the absence of lateral support from the bench seat. A grab handle for the passenger comes in useful, while for the driver, learning to hold onto the steering wheel and use leg muscles you never knew existed is an acquired skill.

When I drove Vic Crew's TD around a short route in Northumberland, I was amazed by how much fun you can have in a car that takes almost a quarter of a minute to reach 60mph from standing. However, my first impression of sitting in the TD concerns space. There's a surprising amount of it when it comes to elbow and hip room, but not so much in the footwells, especially on the driver's side where the brake pedal and accelerator are close together – you need slim shoes to avoid stamping on both at the same time.

On the move, the simple ladder frame chassis generates some scuttle shake over rough surfaces, of which we have plenty these days. The steering provides plenty of feedback, but not to the point that you're fighting with it. As for the suspension, it is fantastic, riding the bumps in the road and never transferring the effects of a pothole through to the chassis or bodywork.

As we approached a sweeping left corner, I managed a swift change down to third and took a grip of the steering wheel, knowing there was nothing keeping me in my softly sprung sofa-wide bench seat. Yet the car scooted around the corner with ease, clearly demonstrating the ability of the TD's suspension and its simple yet effective chassis. 'The great thing about a car like this is you can feel it around the corners,' Vic commented.

'Armchair motoring with 1950s sports car performance' is surely the best way to sum up the feeling of driving a TD. We're not talking neck-breaking speed, but the overall package was a revolutionary step forward in terms of the pre-war T-Types, and if other more modern rivals made the TD look anachronistic, it could still show them a thing or two in terms of sporting fun. Yet the TD is not only a sports car, but also a capable cruiser, largely thanks to its comfortable seating and because it has a properly designed windscreen that keeps the airflow away from your ears and eyes. I felt I could happily cruise all day in a car like this. Just don't expect motorway speeds all day long; when I say cruising, 50-60mph on country A-roads is what I'm talking about.

MB



**ABOVE:** The TD had round dials ahead of the driver and a single bench-style backrest.

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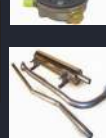
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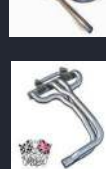
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**MG had wanted to introduce their replacement for the T-Types back in 1952, but company politics held it back until 1955. It was worth the wait though, as the new sports car was sleek, beautiful and a great all-rounder.**

**T**he T-Types had transformed the fortunes of MG, but there was no denying that by the time the 1940s turned into the 1950s, it was beginning to lag seriously behind the new post-war designs being introduced elsewhere. On the classic scene that is all part of a T-Type's charm, but when you are

trying to sell new cars, then modernity is key for everybody except Morgan. The Austin-Healey 100 had paved the way for a new design of closed-wheel rear-wheel-drive sports car with its launch at the Earls Court Motor Show in 1952, quickly followed in 1953 by the TR2 from Triumph. Leonard Lord at BMC was not willing to let MG compete with

his Austin-Healey pet project though, so Abingdon had to wait until September 1955 before they could launch their new MGA Roadster. Powered by a 68bhp 1489cc B-series engine, the MGA had drum brakes all round with coil spring suspension at the front, leaf springs at the rear and lever arm dampers at each corner. The following year, a coupé version was released which featured wind-up windows along with its roof (the Roadster had removable side screens to go with its hood).

The MGA 1500 as it was known could cope with more power, so its B-series engine was tweaked to produce 72bhp, then enlarged in 1959 to 1588cc which added an extra 6bhp to power output and 17% more torque (disc brakes were fitted at the front by this time). Known as the MGA 1600, a Mk2 version was launched in 1961 which was powered by a 1622cc version of the B-series engine. However, the seemingly ultimate MGA appeared in 1958 with disc brakes all round and a 1588cc engine under the bonnet that had an aluminium, chain-driven, twin-cam cylinder head (as opposed to the cast iron overhead valve B-series engine that continued to







be used in the other MGAs). The Twin Cam produced an impressive 108bhp at 6700rpm with 104lb.ft of torque at 4500rpm, and could hit 60mph from stationary in 9.1 seconds, going on to a top speed of 113mph; at the time of its launch, the equivalent 72bhp 1489cc B-series in the MGA 1500 had a top speed of 98mph and took 15.6 seconds to reach 60mph from a standing start.

Unfortunately, the MGA Twin Cam proved not to be as reliable as the B-series engine models (see *Jobs and Costs* for more details) and was axed in 1960 after only 2111 examples had been produced, 1801 of which were Roadsters. Twin Cam leftovers such as the all-round disc brakes were used up on a few hundred De Luxe 1600 models, which had the 1622cc B-series engine under the bonnet.

Sales of the MGA set a new high for the marque with many exported overseas, but the company had to move with the times and investigate going from the separate body and chassis



**ABOVE:** *Much more spacious than a T-Type, the driving position is still very classic.*

design of the MGA to a monocoque. By 1962, such a car was launched in the form of the MGB, so the MGA was retired with sales totalling 101,081, far more than any previous MG model.

## Buying Advice

The condition of an MGA's body is the primary driver behind its value. With a separate chassis and bodywork all constructed from steel, rust is a

»

## Driving impressions

The interior of an MGA reflects a typical sports car of the 1950s, with long, deep footwells and a driving position that's close to the steering wheel. There's an art to getting into the driver's side by manoeuvring your legs underneath the steering wheel and into the long footwells, whilst at the same time lowering yourself onto the seat. And the doors aren't particularly long, so you need to twist your legs around and get into position, which is a lot harder in a Coupé, or in a Roadster with the hood erected.

Once you are seated, the lack of seat belts can leave you feeling vulnerable, although it is feasible to fit them. All round visibility is good in both the Roadster and the Coupé, although optional wing-mounted

side mirrors don't provide much assistance. (Clip-on overtaking mirrors can be fitted and are better).

Starting the engine involves a turn of the ignition key, followed by pulling out a knob to activate the starter motor. The handbrake lever is mounted on the propshaft tunnel and is a fly-off design, so it is counter-intuitive but if it feels loose, then it's on. For the handbrake to be off, the lever needs to be pulled up with the button on the front of it pushed in. If this does the job, then the handbrake lever will now have some resistance when it's pulled up – but if you pull it up, the handbrake will be on again!

The final challenge in driving an MGA is the lack of synchromesh on first gear. Don't expect to be able



to select first gear without double-declutching when the car is moving, and lots of mechanical sympathy is required to ease the gear stick into position when stationary. On the move, gear selection is much smoother.

Exactly how you view the overall dynamics does rather depend on what you are comparing it to. An MGA provides more comfort, more protection from the elements and considerably more performance than a T-Type, but compared to a modern car it will sound noisy and harsh at cruising speeds and the brakes will feel adequate at best.

However, what else would you expect from a 1950s vintage car? Approach it with a realistic mind set and you will adore what it has to offer – a surprisingly refined ride quality from the suspension and live rear axle, direct steering, a beautiful car that is a competent tourer on the one hand, but also one that is capable of keeping up with modern traffic.





# Post-War MG Sports Cars

major problem, especially around the battery box, floor mounts (floorboards themselves are plywood), sills, door posts and door frames. There's also a large lump of sound deadening felt fitted near the front body mounting area which can become soaked with water, resulting in corrosion of any surrounding metalwork.

Chassis corrosion often begins with floorboard supports and the area underneath the A-posts, between the inner sill and chassis rail that can fill up with road dirt. Having said that, the chassis are reasonably robust, and previous accident damage twisting it out of true may be your bigger problem. The Twin Cam chassis is slightly different to a B-series engine chassis, but only concerning mounting brackets which are in different positions for the engine, steering rack, pedal box, brake lines and some of the body mounts.

The exterior skins of the doors, bonnet and bootlid are all made from aluminium, but have a steel framework underneath so you need to be wary of any bubbling where the two meet. These and the main steel panels are available, but they are expensive and may require fettling to fit. And if the body has to come off the chassis for repairs, then lining everything back up afterwards can be notoriously time-consuming. If you are paying a professional to do that for you, then you can replace the words 'time consuming' with 'very expensive.'

The B-series engine is much less of a concern as it is a well-proven OHV motor that requires only routine



maintenance to keep it in good working order, and rebuilds are not too expensive anyway.

Look for 50-60psi of oil pressure when hot, and listen out for rumbles from the bottom end. Infrequent use can result in hardened valve stem oil seals, which results in a plume of smoke from the exhaust, usually on the overrun. Oil leaks can emerge from the back of the engine, next to where it is mounted to the gearbox bellhousing. The cause of the leak is often the rear main oil scroll. A more modern lip seal can be fitted to replace the older scroll design, but the engine has to be removed to fit it and some machining is involved.

Reliability problems associated with the Twin Cam model's engine have now been resolved by a number of specialists. The MG Owners' Club reckon the Twin Cam's poor reliability was largely caused by the high compression ratio of the engine (initially 9.9:1, but later reduced to 8.3:1), which required perfect ignition timing and the

use of the correct spark plugs along with top-grade fuel to avoid detonation of the pistons. Another problem was that the engine had chromed piston rings and cylinder bores, which resulted in excessive oil consumption.

MGA specialist Bob West, who agrees with the aforementioned problems, has also discovered that the valve caps on some early engines had not been hardened, so they would break and the collets would pull through. And whilst the compression ratio of the engine can be lowered to help preserve it, he prefers to keep it a little higher at 9.5:1 by fitting forged and domed pistons that are the same as those used in the engines of the Le Mans race cars. Bear in mind that rebuilding a Twin Cam engine is nowhere near as cheap as it is for the OHV version.

The standard brakes on the B-series MGA (drums all round or discs/drums) are reliable if properly maintained. The Twin Cam model has Dunlop 10.75in diameter discs and calipers all round, with a mechanical handbrake system operating the rear discs via separate calipers and pads. The mechanical pivot

## Buying Advice



**ABOVE LEFT TO RIGHT:** Taking the body off to repair the chassis will be time-consuming and/or expensive; the B-series engine is cheap to rebuild and has plenty of upgrade options; the Twin Cam motor is, like the rest of the car, very expensive.



for the handbrake can seize, so it must be regularly checked and lubricated.

Prices of MGAs have rocketed in recent years. Ten years ago you could have bought one of the best OHV Roadsters for around £15,000. These days that will at best get you a usable car needing work, while you'll have to pay twice as much for the best and even £5000 buys you nothing more than a total restoration project. Coupés have seen a similar rise, although they still lag behind the topless cars by a couple of grand. As for Twin Cams – if you have to ask, then you probably can't afford one with asking prices pushing at the £50,000 barrier.

## Modifications

Modern upgrades are a good starting point for modifications, including an unleaded cylinder head for around £250, a high-torque starter motor for less than £200 and updating the electrics with an alternator conversion for around £260 to replace the dynamo, switching from positive earth to negative, replacing the twin six-volt batteries for a single 12-volt unit and upgrading to electronic ignition for £100 more. Switching from positive to negative earth may mean the voltage regulator can be retained, but some of the connections will need to be changed around. If a replacement SU fuel pump is fitted with a positive earth diode, the diode will need reversing, or for a single polarity fuel pump the feed and earth wires may need swapping over. Not everyone agrees these upgrades are

entirely necessary, though.

Standard brake discs can be uprated with performance pads for around £70 and drilled and grooved discs for around £250. Adding braided stainless-steel flexi-hoses for around £70 can help to maintain braking pressure, while a remote vacuum-operated servo for around £160 can reduce the amount of braking effort required when pressing the brake pedal.

Upgrades to later MGB discs and calipers are feasible on the front, but the conversion involves changing to MGB front suspension. Moss's conversion kit may require a pair of Mk2 MGA front hubs (available new), depending on what is already fitted – prices start at £400. NTG's conversion kit includes all the parts, including the hubs, for £611.80. Hoyle Suspension offer a front four-pot caliper conversion for the MGA, featuring 10.75in vented discs that fit within most 15in road wheels. Priced at £834, it requires MGB stub axles (£40-£50 each).

The standard lever arm dampers can be changed for telescopic dampers at the rear, which are manufactured by the likes of Gaz, Spax and Koni, and cost around £200 for a conversion kit. Polyurethane bushes can replace standard rubber bushes from around a fiver each, and there's a Special Tuning anti-roll bar kit that can be fitted to the front for £220 (a chassis extension assembly for £290 must be fitted to models prior to chassis number 66574).

Hoyle Suspension has developed a number of suspension designs for »

## “ MODERN UPGRADES ARE A GOOD STARTING POINT FOR ANY MODIFICATIONS ”



**ABOVE:** OHV MGA engines were offered in three capacities: 1498cc, 1588cc & 1622cc.

## Modifications



**ABOVE:** Beautiful replica Dunlop style wheels from Frontline can replace both steel and wire wheels.



**ABOVE:** Upgrade options for the brakes are available if you feel you need more modern stopping power.



**ABOVE:** Engine transplants may change the character of an MGA, but you still get those beautiful curves!



**ABOVE:** A Hoyle independent rear suspension is highly regarded and will transform the handling of an A.



# Post-War MG Sports Cars

the MGA. Their front double wishbone coilover conversion costs £1074, while at the rear they offer an independent setup with a Ford differential, double wishbones, coilovers and disc brakes. Prices for that start at £2382.

Engine modifications are largely applicable to the B-series. Fitting the later three main bearing 1800 from the MGB is perhaps the best starting point if you desire more performance, but they are getting very hard to find. An even later five main bearing engine can be fitted, but the cable drive for the rev-counter cannot be refitted as this engine has an electronic version (easily rectified with a new rev counter). Also, the engine mounts will need to be altered, whereas the mounts of the three main bearing engine won't. NTG point out that an 1800 engine is best fitted with a tubular exhaust manifold as the standard MGA manifold is inadequate.

Whatever B-series engine is fitted, there's plenty of tuning potential. Larger twin SU carbs or DCOE Webers are a popular starting point, with new components costing from £700 upwards. Around £1000 buys a lighter and airflow-efficient aluminium crossflow cylinder head. Look for stage tuning kits that help to bring together a number of modifications (exhaust, fuelling and ignition).

A supercharger conversion is



perhaps the ultimate upgrade for a B-series engine, but you do need to make sure the engine is in good condition. Moss

offers such a conversion kit for £3672, which uses an Eaton MP45 supercharger and an SU HS6 carburettor to produce 40% more bhp.

Engine transplants are also popular, but do not underestimate what a major and invasive upgrade this can be. Modern twin-cams such as the Honda VTEC and the Mazda MX-5 are some examples that have been successfully fitted, and Rover V8s have been shoe-horned in too. The standard four-speed gearbox can be changed for a later Ford Type 9 five-speed unit. NTG sell a

complete kit, including the gearbox, for around £2500. Vitesse-Global also offer a conversion kit using a more modern Mazda gearbox, and the parts for that cost around £2900.

The MGA's standard rear differential has a final drive ratio of 4.3:1 in the Mk1 1500 and 1600, and a 4.1:1 ratio in the Mk2. Other diff ratios are available, and one of the most popular is the early MGB's 3.9:1 crownwheel and pinion, which provides lower revs for cruising and is more suitable when gearboxes such as the Ford Type 9 are fitted.

The MGA wasn't equipped with seat belts as standard, but it was an option on the Mk2 and seat belts can be fitted using aftermarket harnesses at around £40 each, with spreader plates costing £5 each. Leather seats were fitted as standard, and covers are still available from many specialists, but with a wider choice of finishes and colours. Expect to pay at least £500 for leather covers, or £1000 for rebuilt leather seats with new wooden seat bases.

Wire wheel conversions are available to transform a steel wheel MGA to splined hubs, and in some cases the halfshafts and brake drums have to be changed. Budget for between £550 and £700 for a conversion kit, then a further £700 for a set of painted wire wheels and another £300 for tyres. Another authentic wheel is the Dunlop steel wheel with a centre spinner, similar to those fitted to the MGA Twin Cam, which are available from Frontline Developments as an alloy and steel replica. These are available for hubs with and without centre locks. Budget for upwards of £1700 for a set of four. ❹





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## Midget



If the MGA and MGB were too expensive for your average impecunious young blade, then the Midget offered a cheaper way into the sporting scene. The miniature MG is still performing that same role today.

**W**hen the MG Midget first appeared in 1961, it was essentially a badge engineered Austin-Healey Sprite – the Mk1 'Frogeye' Sprite had been launched in 1958, and the Mk2 Sprite was identical to the new MG Midget except for having less brightwork and alternative badges. By contrast to the MGA, the Midget

or Sprite (collectively known as the Spridget) offered a cheaper, more basic route into sports car ownership. The early cars had drum brakes all round, a 948cc A-series engine under the bonnet that drove the rear wheels via a four-speed gearbox and a live axle. There were no wind-up windows, just sidescreens and a stowaway hood and associated framework.

A year after the Midget's launch, the A-series engine was enlarged to 1098cc, and front disc brakes were introduced a year on again in 1963. Despite these changes, the Midget remained in Mk1 guise until 1964, when the Mk2 was launched with wind-up windows, lockable doors and optional wire wheels. This was replaced by the Mk3 two years later in 1966, which saw the A-series engine stretched to the maximum at 1275cc to produce 65bhp at the flywheel. A foldable hood was now fitted, which was easier to operate than the previous removable assembly.

The Sprite ceased production in 1972, by which time it had lost the Healey tag and was badged simply as an Austin, but the Midget continued on. Round rear wheelarches were introduced in that year on what many people regard as the prettiest of the Midget bodies, replacing the flatter designs of previous models. Two years later, the Midget 1500 was launched, which saw the 1275cc A-series replaced by a larger 1493cc OHV







unit taken from its deadly in-house rival, the Triumph Spitfire. The rear wheelarches also reverted to their former profile after it was found these were stronger in the event of a rear end shunt, and the chrome bumpers were replaced with large, black impact-absorbing items commonly known as rubber bumpers. This altered not only the aesthetics, but also the handling as the steel girders behind them added a hefty dose of weight at the little car's extremities. The ride height was also raised, making it easier to get in and out but further blunting its original nimbleness. It was a more leisurely cruiser though, and at last a genuine 100mph car. In this guise, the model lasted until 1979.

The front suspension features kingpins with coil springs, lever arm dampers, upper and lower arms (the lower arm forms the seat for the coil spring) and an anti-roll bar on later models. At the rear, a live axle is located with leaf springs (quarter-elliptic at first, then semi-elliptic) and



**ABOVE:** *Getting in is rarely graceful, but once achieved, the driving position is good.*

lever arm dampers.

The Midget is still a tempting DIY project, so if you want a cheap way into ownership and are prepared to get stuck into a restoration, abandoned examples cost around £1000, whereas

tatty reliable runners with lots of issues may cost twice this amount. However, a thorough restoration is probably going to cost over £5000, in which case, buying a completed project may be cheaper at £6000 or more. »

## Jobs and costs

Some of the common problems associated with the Midget concern the suspension. The kingpins at the front can wear for instance, and the lever arm dampers all round can leak. Reconditioned or uprated lever arm dampers are available from £35. Corrosion can appear in the front lower suspension arms and the hangers for the rear leaf springs too.

Bodywork corrosion in general is a major problem, whether it's aesthetic or structural. The front panel and lower edges of the front

wings right around to the A-panels are all susceptible to corrosion. The wheelarches inevitably get peppered with road dirt, resulting in corrosion, especially where the wheelarch meets the sill. The rust can spread to the sills and floors. If rainwater doesn't drain out of the doors they can corrode along the bottoms, and water can collect inside the boot. Corrosion repairs are difficult to put a price on. A sill for instance can cost as little as £40 and a complete rear wing costs £155, but there's often no telling how



extensive the corrosion is until all of it has been cut away. A brand new bodyshell costs just over £10,000.

The range of A-series and Triumph overhead valve engines that power the Midget have all proven to be reliable, so long as they are routinely maintained. Head gasket failure, if it happens, often starts between cylinders three and four, which are furthest from the water pump. The valve stem oil seals can harden if the engine is infrequently used, just like many other engines. A rattly top end is often caused by incorrect valve clearances. If the problem persists after adjustment, the rocker gear may need to be removed and machined where each rocker's pad makes contact with the pushrod.

Maintenance of the braking system is straightforward with a plentiful supply of affordable spares. Brake discs cost around £20 for a pair and a new brake caliper is £55, for example.





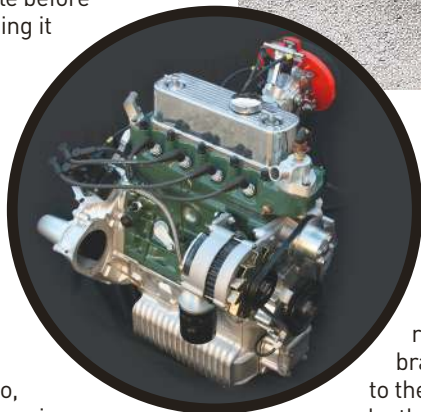
# Post-War MG Sports Cars

## Modifications

The Midget has always been a magnet for body modifications, from GT hard tops to droop snoot noses all the way up to a total transformation into something like the Arkley SS. This trend is continuing, and we've got a few of the options overleaf. So right now, we'll concentrate on the running gear mods.

Mechanically, the suspension's lever arm dampers can be changed for more modern telescopic units for around £1000 (including mounting bracketry). Experimenting with front coil springs, rear leaf springs and suspension bushes (eg. upgrading from rubber to polyurethane) can help to improve the ride quality and handling of the Midget, but some owners are perfectly happy to stick with standard, so try before you decide to splash the cash. As discussed later, there is a noticeable difference between driving a lighter and more responsive early Midget and a heavier rubber bumper 1500, so you want to make sure you get the one that suits your driving style before automatically assuming it has to be modified.

If the engine has been uprated, then the suspension may suffer from tramping under hard acceleration when setting off. This happens when the rear leaf springs wind up as the rear axle puts the power down, then they let go, resulting in the car hopping or tramping. Fitting anti-tramp bars between the front and mid-mounting points for the leaf springs can help to remove the risk of tramping and help to control the vertical movement of the axle. Expect to pay around £200 for an



anti-tramp kit, but be aware that fitting this may result in a harsher ride quality.

Brake upgrades include fitting a remote servo to reduce the amount of braking effort applied to the pedal (this doesn't make the brakes perform any better, they just require less effort on the brake pedal). Budget for £70-£150 for a single-circuit servo, and £300 for a later dual-circuit system.

Performance discs and pads are a good starting point for upgrading the

brakes, with drilled discs and Mintex M1144 pads costing around £140. A full set of braided stainless-steel flexi-hoses will help to maintain braking pressure (less ballooning than standard rubber flexi-hoses) and cost around £100 a set. Frontline have developed a number of brake upgrade kits, including four-pot front calipers with discs and pads for just over £900, and a rear disc conversion from £1175.

Engine modifications are well-catered for thanks to the A-series being shared with the likes of the Mini and the 1500's engine being used in the Triumph Spitfire. Larger carburettors, wilder camshafts, performance rocker

## Modifications



**ABOVE LEFT TO RIGHT:** Strange but true – the twin cam head from a BMW motorbike can be made to fit the A-series; the modified front suspension from Frontline; rear disc conversions are available for cars that have been heavily modified.





*The ultimate in modified Midgets? Stuart Gunn shoe-horned a V8 and four wheel drive into this car!*



**ABOVE:** An anti-tramp kit like this can stop the rear springs winding up, especially if the engine's been tuned.

gear and performance free-flowing exhaust manifolds and systems are some of the popular upgrades. The engines can be over-bored, with popular displacements for the 1275 A-series being 1293, 1310, 1340 and 1380cc. The cast iron, five-port A-series cylinder head can be changed for more ports (eg. eight-port crossflow), aluminium or even a twin-cam from the BMW K100 motorbike. And that is before you even start on conversions such as the K-series or Ford Zetec.

Talking of Ford, the Type 9 five-speed gearbox can be mated to the Midget's standard range of engines. Expect to pay around £1000 for a conversion kit from the likes of Frontline, and up to £1000 for an overhauled gearbox.

## Driving impressions



**ABOVE:** It is easy to dismiss the rubber bumper Midgets without giving them a go, but they are still huge fun, and when they look this good, who could say no?

In a standard set-up, the Midget can be regarded as a no-frills sports car, especially the Mk1-Mk3, but this should be the appeal of such a car. It is basic, small, agile and good fun to drive. When compared to an MGA or MGB of the time, or a modern sports car such as a Mazda MX-5, it's much smaller and less refined. The driving position is typical of an MGA, with your feet lost inside the deep footwells and the steering wheel close to your chest.

The handling is predictable, but with a short wheelbase and a live axle almost underneath the front seats, the ride quality can be slightly harsh at times, especially on the Mk1 Midget with its quarter elliptic rear leaf springs (later models had semi-elliptics). Some people feel the Mk1 is a little twitchier, whereas the 1500

with its heavy rubber bumpers is not so agile, but can be more relaxing to drive with its torquy Triumph motor. The steering isn't power assisted, but not too heavy and certainly not as heavy at slow speeds as the MGB's.

Synchromesh isn't available in first gear on the Mk1-3, but the 1500 uses the gearbox from the Morris Marina. The action on this isn't generally as smooth, but it is at least an all-synchro unit. Pre-1963 Midgets have drum brakes all round, whereas later models have front disc brakes. There's nothing wrong with drum brakes, providing they are correctly adjusted. However, disc brakes require less maintenance and perform better under high speed braking. Some MG dealers offered an optional brake servo when the Midget was available new.





# Post-War MG Sports Cars

## Body Beautiful

In this feature we have talked almost exclusively about the MG Midget, though we did mention at the outset how this was a badge-engineered version of the Austin-Healey Sprite. The MG's arrival coincided with the adoption of more conventional styling for the front and back of the Sprite, which had started out as what everybody now calls the Frogeye. That nickname was because of the headlight pods on the bonnet, fitted not for styling purposes but because the desired pop-up lights were too expensive. Together with a radiator grille that turns up at the corners, these give the Frogeye a very definite and very happy face (far right) that is instantly endearing.

That has inspired others to recreate the Frogeye look. One was the Healey Frogeye, created by Keith Brading who set up the Frogeye Car Company on the Isle of Wight in 1986. With the approval of Donald and Geoffrey Healey, he produced finished cars, and also sold assembly kits that would enable owners of an original Frogeye to rebuild a wreck, and for owners of later Spridgets to restore them with the Frogeye look using rust-free GRP bodywork on a rust-free galvanised chassis. The rebuilt cars used enough of the essential components to retain their original registration numbers.

More recently, Tifosi put together a package of GRP panels that could be grafted onto any Sprite or Midget to recreate the Frogeye look (inset). Called the Rana, this kit is now produced and sold by MG specialist, Hall's Garage. They



also produce the Tifosi SS, a faithful reproduction of the original Sebring Sprites that were campaigned by John Sprinzel in the 1950s and 1960s, and very recently introduced their

beautiful J.E.M. (bottom right), a coupé inspired by the Jacobs Midgets.

A more extreme conversion is the Westfield XI (below), which uses Midget running gear to recreate the Lotus Eleven racer. This is still produced in small batches, and at the time of writing a new batch was about to be produced with a retail price of

£11,499. Such a radical reworking of the Midget is hardly new, as John Britten's garage created the Arkley SS

(above left) in the early 1970s to rebody rusty Spridgets using a new nose, wings and tail but reusing the original structure and doors.

Rather more glamorous was a creation from Italy, the Innocenti Spider and later a Coupé (top). These had been conceived initially when the Frogeye was in production because many people at the time thought that car's styling was odd rather than endearing, and the idea was to combine Italian styling flair with the robust and simple British running gear. Unfortunately the result was expensive, and none too quick once all the extra bodywork and luxury touches had been added. Sadly just 6857 Spiders and 794 Coupés were built by the time production ended in 1968.

This is by no means a definitive guide to all the Midget-based options, but does give a flavour of how versatile the baby MG has been.



**ABOVE AND LEFT:** The Tifosi J.E.M. coupé is the latest Midget-based conversion to be offered, but the Westfield XI may be the most extreme.



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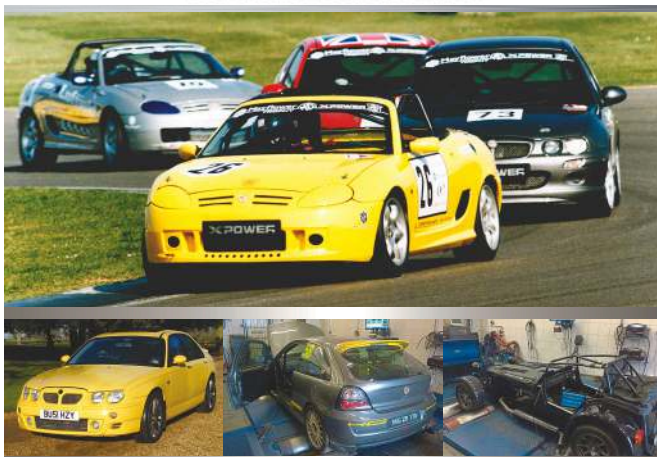
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# Post-War MG Sports Cars



## MGB, MGC and BGT V8

We'll court controversy here by lumping the MGB in with the MGC and the MGB GTV8, but the three share so much in common that we reckon the similarities outweigh the differences.

**T**he MGB is in many people's opinion the most successful sports car MG have made to date, pre- or post-war. Its production life spans three decades from when it was launched in September 1962 to when MG ceased production in 1980. Throughout this time, the majority of models were

powered by the cast iron 84-95bhp 1798cc four-cylinder OHV B-series engine. However, the 2912cc straight-six C-series engine was used to create the MGC, which was produced between 1967 and 1969. Not strictly in the MGB camp, this shared most of the B's body, the only external distinguishing characteristic being bulges in the

bonnet, though there was also a new torsion bar front suspension and revised sheet metal under that familiar skin. The only other engine option offered by the factory was the Rover 3526cc V8. This created the BGT V8, which was produced between 1973 and 1976. In one of those painful twists of fate this was just in time for the world to enter a fuel crisis and sales were never good. (The O-series OHC unit was planned, but progress was delayed for so long that the Abingdon factory had closed before this came to fruition.)

Initially launched as a Roadster, the BGT came along in 1965 with 2+2 seating being an option until 1968, after which it became standard. The MGC was also offered as both a Roadster and a GT, though the factory only ever offered the B V8 in GT form. In 1975, the chrome bumper exterior was changed to large impact-absorbing 'rubber' buffers to comply with US legislation, the ride height being raised at the same time and for the same reason, with handling suffering as a result.

Over half a million MGBs were produced during its lifetime, along with







8999 MGCs and 2591 MGB GTV8s. The cheapest way into owning any of these models is to buy a rubber bumper GT, but prices of even this entry level model have been pulled along with the rest of the classic car market in recent years, so expect to pay around £4000 or more for a seemingly reliable daily driver that needs looking after. £1000-£2000 only buys abandoned basket cases these day, or cars which may be on the road but will likely need sill replacement and other work in the near future.

Chrome bumper Roadsters are always the most popular and now appear to be selling for £10,000 or more. If you're looking for a genuine BGT V8 or an MGC, then £15,000-£20,000 seems to be the starting price for something halfway decent. »



**ABOVE:** The is a late-model dash, but changes from earlier cars were fairly minor.

## Jobs and costs

Routine maintenance is within the scope of most DIY enthusiasts, especially oil changes, engine and brake servicing. Expect to pay around a fiver for an oil filter and £20-£40 for branded multigrade oil. MGOC Spares sell a comprehensive front brake disc service kit for £99.95, which includes a new pair of 10.75in solid EBC grooved discs, a set of pads and a fitting kit.

Corrosion is the biggest problem to look for and with no separate chassis, the steel bodywork is the structural part of the car. Sills, floors, wings and arches are all susceptible to rust, and the true extent of this can often be hidden. Repair panels, new panels and complete bodyshells are

available, many of them produced by British Motor Heritage on the original press tooling. The MGB Hive in Wisbech stock all of these, and charge £575 for a front wing, £179.95 for a three piece sill kit, £95 for a door skin and £469.95 for a complete door. As ever though, buying panels is only the tip of the iceberg because there will also be a lot of peripheral welding to be done, not to mention the subsequent painting and fitting up.

And it's not just the bodywork that can corrode – everything from the petrol tank to the rear leaf springs can rust and either leak or break. On the other hand, everything you will need is available and generally cheap.



**ABOVE:** Replacing a rusty sill can soon escalate into a complete body refurb, but a competent DIYer can do the lot.

The B-series engine is the cheapest to maintain when compared with the MGC's straight-six and the BGT V8's eight cylinder, and the cheapest to rebuild. A professionally reconditioned B-series engine costs around £1500, whereas a Rover V8 needs a budget of close to £5000, and an MGC straight-six costs a little bit more than that. Those figures are before you get tempted by any serious modifications.



**ABOVE:** Clutch changes will need the engine to come out, but again that is not a particularly difficult job on an MGB so long as you have access to a crane.



**ABOVE:** The MGB engine bay provides ample access for servicing, though the points are buried at an awkward angle.



# Post-War MG Sports Cars



**ABOVE:** Traditional performance mods such as supercharging add a hefty dose of period sparkle to performance.

## Modifications

Several subtle modern upgrades are available for all engines in the B, including electronic ignition from £65, a sports coil from £20, performance silicone HT leads from £30, an alternator upgrade (early models used a dynamo) for £150 (including converting the rev counter) and changing from the twin 6v batteries fitted in the chrome bumper cars to a single 12v unit as fitted to rubber bumper models. If the cylinder head hasn't been converted to run on unleaded fuel, budget for around £250 (£600 for the MGC, and £595 for the two heads of the Rover V8 by RPI Engineering) for the machine work and extra for removal and fitting.

The standard sealed beam headlights can be changed for units with H4 halogen bulbs for around £40. If a brake servo isn't fitted, then a remote unit costs around £120, which helps to reduce braking effort but doesn't increase braking performance. Other upgrades include fitting drilled and grooved discs and performance pads,



which should help to reduce the risk of brake fade. A set of braided stainless-steel flexi-

hoses to reduce ballooning

and maintain braking pressure costs around £35. If that's not enough, then there are a number of four-pot brake upgrade conversion kits which cost from around £600, but these may not be compatible with wire wheels or wheel diameters less than 15in – the C came with 15in wheels, the B wore 14in rims from the factory but looks good with an extra inch.

There's a huge assortment of modifications available for the suspension. A popular starting point is to change the lever arm dampers for more modern telescopic dampers.

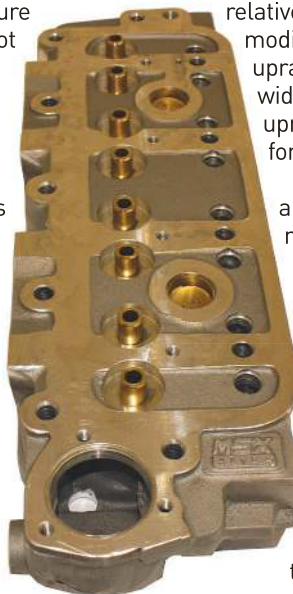
Conversion kits for the front and rear cost around £400-£500. Most of the standard suspension components can be modernised, but the standard front coil springs, lever arm dampers and

rear leaf springs can all be uprated for around £500, and that may well be enough. The ride height can be lowered by fitting shorter coil springs at the front and lowering blocks at the rear, all for less than £100. Other

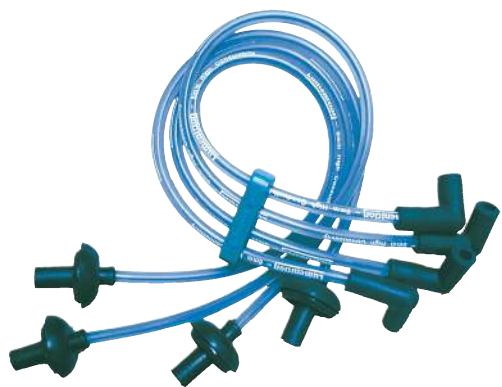
relatively cheap suspension modifications include fitting uprated bushes for under £100, wider 175/70xR14 tyres and uprating the front anti-roll bar for around £70.

More expensive and ambitious suspension modifications include a double wishbone conversion for the front with either a separate damper and spring or a coilover. Some kits require the front crossmember to be modified, so budget from £800. At the rear, a five-link suspension kit is available for £1500 to replace the standard components, which includes coilovers, twin trailing arms, a Panhard rod and locating brackets.

Squeezing more performance from the B-series engine is relatively straightforward, starting with changing



**ABOVE:** Webcon's alloy head for the MGB costs a little over £1000 and should free up some horses.



**ABOVE:** Don't neglect the basics – new and improved service items such as HT leads could transform a tired car.





the standard SU carburettors to a pair of larger HS6s or a single Weber 45DCOE for around £600-£700. Add a free-flowing exhaust system for around £400 and the engine will breathe better and be more responsive. If that's not enough, the next stage is to look at the camshaft to refine the power delivery for around £120 or more, then the cylinder head. A re-worked and gas flowed head may be the answer, a modified exchange head assembled with new components costing c£700.

If you're happy to up the budget to just over £1000, then an aluminium crossflow cylinder head from Webcon should make a noticeable difference, but remember that it requires new manifolds for fuelling and exhaust, so the final bill will probably exceed £2000. An alternative route is to stick



**ABOVE:** The MGC head can benefit from porting and polishing from the likes of MG Motorsport or Colne Classics.

## V8 engine modifications

Aside from the genuine BGT V8, there are also numerous B-series MGB Roadsters and GTs that have been converted to Rover V8 power. For these engines, many will be running on twin SU carburettors, which can be mildly tweaked with new needles and performance air filters. The torque can be altered and improved by fitting the same cam that's used in the 3.9-litre version of the Rover V8 (expect to pay around £90). If the exhaust manifolds are made from cast iron, RV8 stainless-steel headers for around £500 can release an extra



**ABOVE:** The Rover V8 is available in a number of capacities, and fed by carburettors or modern fuel injection

10-15bhp (the inner wings have to be modified), and the exhaust system can be changed for around £200.

to the standard cylinder head, but fit a supercharger conversion from the likes of Moss for around £3500. This is arguably the most effective method of achieving a huge power gain (around 40%), but does rely on the fact that the engine is in good working order.

Power steering conversions are available for all models. Budget for around £1200 for a kit and an extra £300 for fitting.

## MGC modifications

The standard twin SU carburettors fitted to the MGC can be changed for a triple set of SUs, Webers or even motorbike carbs for around £1500. A good starting point is to fit a six-branch exhaust manifold and twin pipe system from around £1000. A re-profiled camshaft costs around £280 and should be equipped with Vernier timing gear for £240 to accurately time-up the

engine. The cast iron cylinder head can be ported and gas flowed to improve performance, and specialists such as MG Motorsport and Colne Classics charge around £1000. They can also build fast road or trackday engines with prices starting at around £5820.

More performance demands better suspension and braking. The brakes can be tweaked with performance discs and pads and braided stainless-steel flexi-hoses, with prices similar to those for the MGB. A four-pot big brake upgrade with ventilated discs costs around £900.

Suspension modifications are similar to those outlined for the MGB, with uprated bushes, adjustable dampers at the front and a telescopic conversion at the rear for around £200. Frontline offer a Panhard rod conversion for the rear of the MGC which costs £350, and a five-link set-up at £1900.





# Post-War MG Sports Cars

## Driving Impressions

The MGB can still be regarded as a practical everyday sports car, although the hood on the Roadster is a little more time-consuming and awkward to operate than an MGF's for instance. The B-series engine is quite torquey, but needs to be worked hard to become entertaining. Having an overdrive switch in third and fourth gears on many models makes for rapid changes down the gearbox in preparation for cornering, and for more relaxed cruising on motorways.

The larger engines fitted to the MGC and BGT/V8 offer more performance of course, and all of them have the potential to be tuned. However, the B-series MGB is more suited to relaxed touring in original trim, and that touring appeal – whether in the Roadster or GT – is where these cars really excel. They even have decent luggage space for two people, especially the versatile GT with its hatchback. All in all they make for very relaxed cruisers which can provide a decent turn of speed to make overtaking a relaxed affair.

The ride quality of the MGB with its front coil springs, rear leaf springs and live axle plus lever arm dampers all round is reasonably refined and positive, but do remember we are talking about a car that was introduced in 1962 so don't expect modern levels of comfort and luxury. Having said that, it is a sports car in the traditional mould, so those of a delicate disposition might find it a little choppy on rough surfaces, and the rack and pinion steering is not power assisted so it is heavy, especially at slow speeds or when manoeuvring




**ABOVE AND LEFT:** All Bs are great to drive, but the V8 is arguably the best, and is little thirstier than a four pot!

to park the vehicle. Get beyond those issues and if an MGB fits your body shape, then it is a car that you can drive for many hours at a time and still get out feeling eager for more. Just remember that the GT has a taller screen than the Roadster, so do try both if you are tall and see which works best for you.

The braking system features solid discs and two-pot calipers on the front of all MGB models and drums at the rear, with a brake servo being an optional extra from 1970 and

standard from 1973 (the MGC and GT V8 all had servo assistance). Although servo assistance doesn't provide more braking performance, it reduces the amount of effort required on the pedal, so it's worth having.

My own first taste of an MGB was when I bought an Inca Yellow rubber bumper GT in 1996 and used it as my everyday car for a year. It was a fantastic car and utterly reliable; even when the head gasket blew, the thermostat failed and the petrol tank started to leak, it never let me down and got me home, it just needed fixing. I must admit that I longed for more performance from the B-series engine, but I also appreciated its ability to drive all day long at 70mph.

Over the years, I've driven all of the models, and will never forget a standard GT/V8 with wallowing suspension that had an alarming amount of torque. I was also left gobsmacked by how Frontline Developments had transformed the handling of a GT with their five-link system and coilover conversion kit. MGE's MGC was the perfect candidate for a tour of the Yorkshire Dales in 2004, and I'll never forget the time I volunteered to drive a freshly built 2.1-litre Roadster all the way from CCHL's workshops in Hull to the car's customer in London; the heated seats and extra performance from the tuned B-series were a luxury. Would I have any of these again? You bet I would. 





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## RV8



Conceived as a warm-up act to keep MG's sporting credentials in the public eye while the MGF was being developed, the RV8 has matured into a star in its own right and demand invariably outstrips supply on the classic stage.

**M**G never offered a V8 version of the MGB Roadster, leaving it to independent operators such as Ken Costello to convert secondhand cars. So you could argue that a V8-powered MGB Roadster straight from the factory (the Cowley factory in this case as Abingdon had long-since been closed) was long overdue when it arrived in 1992 in the form of the RV8. Built

around the then-new Heritage MGB bodysell but with enough new outer panels to give it a decidedly different and far more upmarket appearance, it used the same ex-Buick eight-cylinder V8 engine that had been fitted to the MGB GTV8, but now stretched to 3.9-litres and equipped with modern single-point fuel injection to produce 318Nm at 3200rpm and 187bhp at a low-revving 4750rpm.

Production ran until 1995, and it was always planned as a limited run of under 2000 models. In the end 1982 examples were recorded, all in right-hand drive, although press cars and pre-production examples pushed that total to the 2000 limit. Initially seen as too expensive on the UK market, sales struggled and it looked as though even this modest total would be unachievable – just imagine what might have happened to the MGF if the RV8 had been a flop! Fortunately the RV8 went down a storm in Japan and the project was saved. Over 75% of total production was exported there (though many have since returned) and a mere 307 went to UK customers.

The RV8 initially used the five-speed LT77 gearbox, which was later switched to the R380 model, delivering the power to the rear wheels via a live axle with a 3.31:1 final drive ratio. A live axle with leaf springs may sound anachronistic, but it was damped with Koni adjustable telescopics and well located with anti-tramp bars and an anti-roll bar. At the front, the MGB's lever arms were ditched and a new







set-up created that used the same mounting points and geometry, but with more Koni adjustable dampers and an anti-roll bar.

The brakes are in-line servo-assisted with a dual-circuit system, comprising 270mm vented discs with four-pot calipers at the front and 9in diameter drums at the rear. Compomotive were initially commissioned to manufacture a 15in three-piece split rim alloy wheel, but in the end Rover opted for a single cast wheel instead (still 15in diameter).

The collectability and rarity of the RV8 has seen prices steadily rise from when they bottomed out at around £12,000 several years ago. Nowadays, expect to pay upwards of £25,000 for one that has been looked after. »



**ABOVE:** As befits a factory project, the V8 engine installation looks neat and tidy.

## Jobs and costs

Corrosion is not usually the major structural issue that it is with the MGB, partly because of better rust-proofing from the factory but largely because the RV8 was usually cosseted as a plaything from the very outset rather than having to endure many years as a daily driver before reaching that hallowed status. That is not to say it is immune from the rust bug. The windscreen surround and the hood framework are both vulnerable, and Clive Wheatley sells a composite replacement windscreen frame for £1074 (excluding glass). Structurally, the front crossmember can corrode and is best inspected from underneath the front of the vehicle. The sills, wheelarches and other typical MGB rot-spots appear to survive, providing the vehicle is well

maintained and rustproofed.

Inside the plush cabin, the wood veneer can deteriorate, but it can be refurbished on an exchange basis for around £800. MG used matching grain throughout a cabin, so mixing and matching secondhand items will not satisfy fastidious owners. The leather gear knob and gearstick gaiter both wear and may sound trivial, but in a car of this quality the details can be important, so budget £120 to replace them both.

Koni dampers should be replaced over time as they wear. Clive Wheatley sells a full set of Spax adjustables for £552. The rear leaf springs

are long-lasting, which is perhaps payback for their seemingly outdated selection, whereas the front coil springs do break (expect to pay around £60 per coil spring).

Many spares are still available for the RV8, such as new brake calipers for roughly £150 each. However, some parts are proving difficult to source, such as the rear lights where the tooling has been destroyed or lost. Clubs and specialists such as Clive Wheatley are trying to

organise the remanufacture of them, though.

The RV8's V8 engine should produce 25-30psi of oil pressure at tickover and a maximum of 35-40psi at high revs. If an engine produces as little as 10psi, it is usually a sign that the main and big-end bearings have worn.

In some cases, loss of oil pressure (or even high oil pressure) can indicate a sticking oil relief valve, which is easier to fix than a worn engine.

Engine oil leaks are often caused by a blocked breather, resulting in excessive crankcase pressure and failed crank seals (the excessive pressure has been known to lift the valley gasket). And be wary if the sump has been fitted with lashings of sealant, as any excess can get sucked into the oil pickup and block the filter.



**ABOVE AND CIRCLED:** Cream leather interiors are plush, but they do show the dirt. Rear lights are bespoke to the RV8, and you really don't want to break one!




# Post-War MG Sports Cars



**ABOVE:** The RV8 is a mixture of ancient and modern, but once you accept the lack of electric windows and power steering, you can have a lot of fun behind the wheel.

## Driving impressions

At the time of its launch, the RV8 was regarded by many as a cost-cutting sports car that could have been better. TVR were using the same Rover V8 engine in their Chimera and Griffith, albeit larger in some cases, so that wasn't a problem for the RV8. However, fitting outdated leaf springs at the rear, and a live axle? Many other manufacturers had moved onto independent set-ups with a centre-mounted diff, coilovers and upper and lower wishbones, so that raised eyebrows. And drum brakes on the rear were seen as cheap when even a base-model Mazda MX-5 had discs all round. To many, it seemed that MG had merely taken an MGB roadster and updated it in a few areas.

Yet while many journalists of the day felt the ride quality was lacking, especially at the rear, the performance was nothing to be sniffed at with a 0-60mph time of 5.9 seconds and a top speed of 135mph. In many ways the RV8 faced many of the same criticisms that the MGC had faced over two decades previously. Things have changed for both models though, and nowadays an RV8 is regarded as a highly collectable classic that will still leave many more modern sports cars trailing in its wake. It doesn't feel as dated as it was portrayed in the 1990s, and is terrific fun to drive. Its natural home is as a grand tourer (again like the MGC), though modifications are available if you want to turn the dial to a more sporting programme. 



## Modifications



Clive Wheatley sells 17in three-piece split rim alloy wheels to replace the standard single-cast 15in alloys. When fitted with a 205/55 tyre, they offer the same rolling radius, so there should be no risk of the wheelarches being fouled or speedo inaccuracies. The benefit of a larger wheel with a lower profile tyre is better handling but at the expense of ride quality. They cost £400 each. Clive has also collaborated with Polybush to develop a comprehensive set of polyurethane bushes that promise to provide a sufficiently soft ride quality – budget for around £300 for a full set. The lack of power assisted steering was often criticised on a car costing as much as the RV8, but they can be upgraded with a choice of power steering conversions that cost around £2000 plus fitting.

Hoyle offers a six-pot brake upgrade with 335mm vented and grooved discs for a 17in wheel; prices start at £1380. They also offer an uprated front suspension comprising new double upper and lower wishbones and coilovers for £1554. The coil spring and damper are positioned further out than standard, which allows for a lower poundage spring to be fitted, resulting in a more compliant ride. The bump stop is moved from the crossmember to the damper, so there's more suspension travel too and less tendency for the vehicle to crash over bumps in the road.

At the rear, Hoyle can completely modernise the suspension with an assembly that includes a new subframe, driveshafts, hubs, disc brakes and coilovers. Prices start at £2382, but budget for double this amount for a complete ready-to-fit unit with custom-fabricated alloy bearing carriers and brand new driveshafts. Propshafts and exhausts are also available.



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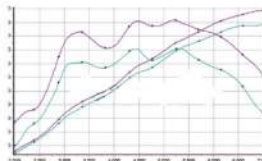
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## MGF and TF



**Launched at the 1995 Geneva Motor Show, the all-new MGF proved that MG was finally willing to face up to the competition from Mazda and Toyota and their highly popular MX-5 and MR2 two-seaters.**

**T**he RV8 may have plugged the sports car gap for MG after their Abingdon factory had closed in 1980, but the mid-engine MGF was proof they could design and create a sports car again from scratch. Okay, so the rear subframe and its engine and gearbox layout were very similar to what can be found under the bonnet of a Metro.

The front subframe was also typical of a Metro (including the same upper outer balljoints) and the Hydragas suspension system was borrowed too, but it was a car where the whole was greater than the sum of its parts.

And in other ways it proved to be a step in the right direction with disc brakes all round (unlike the drums on the back of the RV8), optional electric

power steering (standard from 1998), electric windows and initially a 118bhp Rover K-series engine that was also used in the Lotus Elise. By February 1996, a 143bhp VVC (variable valve control) model was released, helping to beat the 139bhp 1.8-litre twin-cam fitted to the Mazda MX-5 at the time. In May 2001 the most powerful production MGF was released, the 158bhp Trophy 160, which was equipped with lowered and stiffer suspension, AP Racing four-pot front brake calipers with larger discs and aerodynamic bodywork (front splitter and rear spoiler). At the same time, a more basic and cheaper 112bhp 1.6-litre MGF was introduced in a bid to compete with a similar bargain-basement MX-5.

Some purists rejected the MGF at first on account of its mid-engine layout, claiming that a true MG should have the engine up front sending its drive to the rear wheels. They were clearly in a minority though, as sales were strong and by 2002 an impressive 77,212 of them had been sold.







Traditional coilover suspension was the main difference when the TF was released in 2002 to replace the MGF and its floating-on-fluid Hydragas system. The bodywork was also distinctively revised to give it a more modern look (and much greater torsional rigidity into the bargain), but the general shape of this mid-engine two-seater sports car remained easily recognisable. The engine choices remained the same with an entry-level 115Ps 1.6-litre K-series, a 135Ps 1.8 and a 160Ps VVC – thus the models were known as the TF115, TF135 and TF160, although there were numerous limited editions.

Sadly, on the 7th April 2005 the MG Rover Group ceased trading. The Chinese Nanjing Automotive Corporation (NAC) bought the rights and the tooling and reintroduced the TF with a modified version of the K-series engine (known as the N-series) in 2008. It was not a sales success, and despite being a decent product it only lingered until 2011. The world is still waiting for MG to launch another two-seater sports car.

Nowadays, the prices of used MGFs are seemingly at rock bottom for examples that haven't been regularly maintained and repaired, but on



**ABOVE:** Most cabins were fairly austere, but opportunities exist for a little more flair.

the rise for those that have. Expect to pay upwards of £1000 for one with some history and potential for being pressed straight into service, whereas under this value is probably more of a gamble. The better cars are appreciating though, with well-cared for low mileage examples being advertised in the £3000-£5000 bracket, and selling. Even though TFs are up to ten years younger, their prices are not drastically dissimilar to the MGF,

perhaps a shade higher on a like-for-like basis. It is undoubtedly a lot of sports car for very little money.

## Jobs and costs

Head gasket failure is perhaps the best-known problem associated with the MGF, the TF and any other car that uses the K-series engine, ranging from the Rover 25 to the Land Rover Freelander. There are several possible causes and cures. A multilayer head gasket is a big step forwards compared to the original standard single layer item. Check the locating dowels for the head are made from steel, not plastic (as initially fitted, but can be changed to steel). Budget for around £250 to renew the head gasket for a multilayered type, but do have the head pressure tested and checked to see whether it needs a skim. It's also important to measure the difference in height between the cylinder liners and the top of the engine block. It needs to be around 4-thou to ensure the head gasket achieves an adequate seal. And it's important to check over the cooling system to make sure there are no leaks from the steel pipes that are routed underneath the car, any rubber hoses or the front-mounted radiator.

Corrosion is becoming a bigger concern with both the MGF and TF as they age, though still nowhere near as extensive as it is on something like the MGB or Midget. The front subframe appears to be one of the major components to rust. On the MGF, removal requires the Hydragas system to be correctly de-gassed using a suitable pump. The sills can fill up with dirt and water; there are drain »

## Jobs and costs



**ABOVE:** Head gasket changes can now start from just a few hundred pounds – specialists have had a lot of practice!



**ABOVE:** Rust is rarely rampant, but the cars have a number of what might be called grot spots rather than rot spots.



**ABOVE:** Timing belts (the VVC has two) need changing at regular intervals, usually along with the water pump.



# Post-War MG Sports Cars

holes underneath at the front and rear where the seams meet, but they can become blocked, resulting in internal corrosion. Budget for around £90 for a sill repair panel for the MGF plus fitting and paint. The TF's sill repair panel is part of the rear wing, so it costs nearly seven times as much.

The front and rear wheelarches are known to corrode thanks to road salt, dirt and water. Even the mounting panel for the clutch master cylinder can rust, resulting in it becoming insecure and losing operation of the clutch. Cutting out a mounting panel from a scrap car and fitting it appears to be the solution. The cause of the problem? Rainwater getting through.

In fact, problems concerning water are quite extensive on the MGF and TF. The air box that directs fresh air into the heater has an intake that faces upwards (changed to a snorkel type from 2004), so it collects rainwater, which eventually results in corrosion and a wet passenger footwell carpet. The best solution is to fit the later snorkel-shaped air box. Removing the old air box is more awkward than fitting the later one.

Leaks through the hood are often caused by poor seals, many of which can be renewed but won't necessarily guarantee a leak-free cabin. The hood that was fitted to the Mk2 MGF from 1999 is regarded as being more watertight. Plastic rear screens can go opaque or brittle, but they can be replaced with new plastic or upgraded to glass easily enough.

Electrical trouble includes failed window motors, door locks (including the solenoid for the central locking) and key fob problems. New key fobs are available, which need to be coded to the vehicle. Martin Smith sells secondhand window regulators for £45 and door latches for £35. Relays in the Security Control Unit can also fail, affecting everything from windows to wipers and the central locking. Replacing them is tricky, but secondhand boards can be picked up for £20 and a specialist can transfer your vehicle's programming for £100.

The gear linkage cables can break, particularly the lower cable at the



point where it travels underneath the gearbox. Budget for between £130 and £150 for a new set of cables. Watch out too for a stiff clutch pedal.

This invariably means that the clutch actuating arm has seized, and trying to dribble in some oil generally offers at best only temporary relief. Brown and Gammons sell a modified arm with a grease nipple that means the problem will never reoccur, but it is an engine-out job to fit it.

The all-round disc brakes feature single-piston calipers at each corner, except for the Trophy and TF160, which had AP four-pots on the front (and they were also an option on lower models). The sliders for the single-piston calipers can seize and require regular maintenance. The handbrake mechanism on the rear calipers can also seize.

## Modifications

The MGF's Hydragas suspension system cannot be fully maintained with new parts, so when for instance a Hydragas displacer fails (there's



**ABOVE AND INSET:** Coil spring conversions mean that no MGF is beyond repair, while there are a number of braking upgrade options that can fit under 15 or 16in wheels.



one at each corner), new units are not available. If the displacer itself and the rubber diaphragm inside are still sound, Hydragas and Hydrolastic Services Ltd can replace the gas that has leaked out over time or Martin Smith may have secondhand units for sale. Otherwise, specialists such as Mike Satur and Suplex have developed coilover conversion kits – budget for around £1000 or more for the parts, which in Mike's case isn't just a replacement for an obsolete suspension system, but an upgrade to adjustable suspension.

The OE dampers on the MGF and the coilovers on the TF can be uprated for adjustable units (and ride height adjustable units on the TF). Budget around £240 for a set of dampers on the MGF and £600-£900 for a set of coilovers on the TF. Other options for

## My £650 MGF

When I bought a category-C 1996 MGF 1.8i in 2008 for a mere £650, I admit I felt a little nervous. The car had no MoT test and promptly failed on worn balljoints, insufficient brakes, no rear brake lights and a blown headlight bulb. Plus I soon discovered it needed a Vehicle Identification Check (VIC) to verify its identity (this identity check has now been discontinued). And to add to the dilemma, I needed to fix the car and get an MoT certificate before it could undergo the VIC.

Luckily, it passed the retest on all counts and I had several years of MGF ownership ahead of me. I

decided to renew and uprate the head gasket before it well and truly blew, fitted Gaz dampers, uprated the brakes to EBC discs and pads and fitted bucket seats and harnesses to make it into a semi-trackday car. Before selling it, I turned it back to standard and soundproofed the interior and rustproofed the bodywork. In comparison to the Mk2 Mazda MX-5 that replaced it, the MGF was let down by its poor build quality, but overall it was a fun sports car with a lively engine and predictable handling. If the opportunity should arise, I'd have another, or a TF.



**ABOVE:** Buying a cheap car to start with is not always the cheapest option in the long run, but it can make financial sense if you are handy with the spanners.

the TF include fitting the Comfort Pack coilovers that appeared on the TF in 2005, or the Bilstein coilovers fitted to the Chinese-manufactured 85th anniversary TF for around £600.

Front brakes can be upgraded with

MGF Mania's 280mm big brake kit from £175, which can be fitted to 15 or 16in wheels. Other upgrades include performance brake pads from around £40 per set and braided stainless-steel flexi-hoses for around £80. AP four-pot calipers can be bought used from Martin Smith for £125 a pair.

Engine ancillary upgrades often begin with a performance air filter, whether it is a replacement and reusable panel for £40, or an open cone (not recommended in the hot engine bay of the F and TF) or closed air induction kit for £100 or more. SAWS Tuning have found that an open cone in the hot F/TF engine bay will actually lose you power over the standard system that takes its feed from somewhere cooler.

The exhaust system is very short on the MGF/TF, but it can be changed »





# Post-War MG Sports Cars

along with the catalytic converter. Budget for around £300 for a stainless-steel system, and a similar price for a road-legal sports cat.

The MGF was initially equipped with a MEMS 1.9 ECU which cannot yet be re-mapped, but version three (known as MEMS3 and fitted to the Mk2 MGF and the TF) can be done by specialists such as Warwickshire-based Kmaps. Budget for around £240 for a remap, which can be completed by several nationwide dealers, or you can send your ECU through the post and swap it for a ready mapped unit. A remap will make the most of any engine modifications, such as performance camshafts or an exhaust system, helping to remove any constraints. It can also help with an engine that has standard equipment, offering a better throttle response, more power and better fuel economy.

## Driving impressions

Out of all the MGs we've covered in this guide, the MGF and TF have got to be the cheapest fun you can have. Build quality was rarely perfect so don't be horrified by panel rattles and road noise, and if you are buying in the bargain basement then worn suspension balljoints will result in more knocks and rattles. All of these can be resolved with maintenance, a good set of tyres, a nut and bolt check and a good dose of soundproofing.

Not everyone likes the floating feeling generated by the MGF's Hydragas suspension, but if it's in good working order, the geometry is correct and the dampers are not worn, then it works well. The TF's coilovers




**ABOVE:** With roll hoops for added protection, a windstop to protect occupants from drafts and a heater that is very enthusiastic, an F/TF can be enjoyed year round.

can produce unwanted front-end bounce at high speed (known as a nodding dog), resolved by aftermarket adjustable dampers. Many people also find the coil spring suspension to be too harsh for everyday driving, so do try before you buy. MG did fit a revised and softer suspension towards the end, and specialists sell similar kits to soften earlier cars. One thing to be aware of is that these cars, particularly when on 16in rims, can be seriously compromised by poor tyre choice. Currently the only recommended tyres are the Toyo

Proxes T1R and the Falken ZE914.

The MGF/TF is a practical sports car with a separate boot at the back and a smaller compartment under the bonnet that can take small items of soft luggage, but strictly speaking is not designed for carrying purposes because of exposed components such as the brake master cylinder.

Many people use their Fs and TFs for long-distance European touring, and many more are moving across to the mid-engined MGs from cars such as the B, attracted by the newer car's ease of operation and modern touches while still retaining a classic sporting feel.

In fact it is arguably even better than the classic feel, the perfect poise and balance of the mid-engine layout meaning you can flick it through the twisties with confidence and verve. Ultimately if the back end does let go you won't catch it in the same way as you can with an MGB, but you have to be doing silly speeds before that is likely to be an issue. Ultimately the brakes are sharp enough for enthusiastic driving, the suspension is capable if correctly set up and the handling feels light and characteristic of a mid-engine configuration. What this all adds up to is fun with a capital F, everything that an MG sports car should be. 



**ABOVE:** The Chinese-built TFs came with a new nose that blended MGF with TF styling cues. They were generally also extremely well equipped on the inside.



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# Murray loves to Hurry

John Murray reports on a supercharged V8 MG ZT in Australia, one that was built to beat the Japanese supercar imports at their own game.

**M**odifying any classic vehicle is always sure to be a catalyst for heated debate between the purists and those who love the classic/retro appearance but with modern underpinnings. My opinion is that if we want to see the classics on the road, then they will have to adapt to a modern motoring environment. As the generations that originally drove these vehicles as young men and women lose their licences and pass away, then we will only be left with younger generations who do not care about purity, but care greatly about safety, refinement, economy, the environment and of course the crucial Bluetooth.

Time passes so quickly that we are now seeing many vehicles from the very end of the last century becoming classics. These are the last of the true driving cars where safety features such as crumple zones and airbags were installed, but without the electronic limiting devices or nanny features that we see in today's vehicles. Here in Australia, cars such as the Lotus Elise series one, Toyota Supra and Celica GT4 or Nissans Skyline and Silvia as

well as the BMW M-series and Holden Commodore are just some that have reached classic status. Europe and America will also have classics that are virtually unknown here in Australia.

One of these could well be a four-door rear wheel drive sports sedan from the normally underpowered marque of MG. The ZT V8 was really the result of a car company doing what all modifiers have done throughout history – taking an underwhelming but good-looking vehicle, shoehorning in an American V8, putting some big rubber on and finishing off with a sporty interior.

The problem was that for MG-Rover to do this, they had to modify a FWD body to accept a RWD powertrain. They did this, and they did it brilliantly, but what do you do to a V8 when you want more power? You supercharge it of course, and I was invited to cast my eyes over just such a car. The owner, Steven Foldhazy from Sydney, has quite a few MGs and several creations on the go. He is especially fond of the MGC, being the club registrar for that model in the MG Car Club of NSW. He wanted his ZT V8 to be a similar wolf in sheep's clothing.

Steve ran me through the work that had been done. Not wanting to settle for just supercharging, he had commissioned Sean Hyland Motorsport in Canada to purpose-build him a high output 4.6-litre SOHC Ford engine with forged crankshaft, rods and pistons. Aluminium ported cylinder heads were fed by a Kenne Bell twin-screw 12psi supercharger through uprated valves, springs and a special forced induction profile billet camshaft. The engine was dyno tuned and remapped in-house before being shipped to Australia.

Shaun Atkinson of Classic Automobilia was given the task of installation, and any associated modifications required to make the Wayne Bell Mustang supercharger kit fit into the already very crowded MG engine bay. As always with Shaun's work, the finished result had to look as if the vehicle had left the factory that way, and just making the extra components fit wherever there was space was not an option. I'll hand the keyboard over to Shaun to take us through the build process and technicalities, and I will return at the end with my road test review.

## Shaun Atkinson – The Build

To be able to handle the 12psi boost, the incoming charge air had to be cooled. With no room for the diameter of piping required by an air-to-air intercooling system, a coolant-to-air intercooler had to be used. The intercooler radiator was mounted just behind the large opening in the moulded front bar, and the other heat exchanger is integrated into the supercharger unit. This system then uses two 16mm hoses between the two heat exchangers, and routing could take any direction required to achieve the best installation as the hose used for this purpose is 5/8in heater hose and readily available in any angle or shape. The instalment is virtually invisible, as modern engine bays are a mass of such pipes and hoses anyway, snaking their way to and from various ancillaries. Being a separate cooling system, the intercooler requires its own electric coolant pump and pressurised header tank. We used different coloured coolants for each system to make any future coolant leak easily identifiable.

The dyno sheet attached to the engine crate from Sean Hyland showed the engine making a staggering 540lb.ft of torque and 520hp of power at 12psi boost. The original fitment Borg Warner/Tremec T5 gearbox would be shredded if used behind this torque monster, so an alternative transmission was required. The great thing about American muscle car drivelines is that so many aftermarket parts and accessories are available off the shelf, and at reasonable prices. Tremec make a range of transmissions aimed at both the OE (original equipment) market and the aftermarket. The Tremec TKO 600 is a very versatile, lightweight five-speed gearbox capable of handling up to 600lb.ft of torque, and of course a



**ABOVE:** Engine bay with powertrain and subframe removed appears very roomy, but there are a lot of items to squeeze in, especially on a supercharged motor.

bellhousing to suit the Ford engine is readily available. Due to the huge torque output capability of this engine, a six-speed gearbox was not considered as it was unnecessary and would have been a waste of time and money.

The Tremec TKO box comes with several different gear lever locations, unfortunately none of which suited the MG. The gear lever aperture in the MG's tunnel sits quite a long way back and the original T5 box uses a very long extension mechanism to reach back. The other problem was that the TKO box was designed for use with a conventional clutch fork and slave cylinder as used in the Ford Mustang, but the MG, already struggling with space constraints, had to use a direct-acting concentric slave cylinder.

Measurements were taken and the TKO spigot tube was machined down and the original MG concentric bearing carrier modified to fit and give the correct throw for the new high torque clutch kit. A new forged steel lightweight



**ABOVE:** Sump had to be repaired after contact with a sleeping policeman.

**BELOW:** Transmission mounting had to be modified to fit the new drivetrain.



flywheel was also installed. The gear linkage also ended up being a hybrid conversion using the original MG parts and adaptors fabricated to blend the two systems. Modifications also had to be made to the original mechanisms to achieve the desired outcome, but this was far more economical than making a complete new mechanism.

When I was happy with the gear lever positioning, the gearbox was then orientated within the tunnel to achieve the best compromise of tailshaft alignment and powertrain-to-body clearance. Another hybrid blend of components were melded to make the transmission mountings and support bracket. After final assembly it was found that the gear lever fouled slightly »



**Gear change linkage pivots welded and redrilled to give correct gear lever angle.**



« when selecting fifth gear. Fortunately, a little massaging of the tunnel aperture avoided any need for further modifications to the linkage. The output shaft size and spline count were the same as the original T5 gearbox, as was the overall length of the transmission, so the original tailshaft and output flange fitted straight onto the TKO.

All of the component locations and mounting brackets supplied with the supercharger kit were designed for the Ford Mustang, and none of them could be used on the MG! The supercharger drive pulley sits in the original alternator location. Kenne Bell supplies a bracket that changes the orientation and location of the alternator, but the new alternator position fouled with the MG radiator, top hose and fan shroud. To overcome these problems several original components had to be slightly repositioned, and new mounting systems and brackets had to be fabricated and painted.

To aid with engine cooling, an oil cooler was installed. This was mounted behind the radiator because engine oil will operate normally at higher temperatures than the engine coolant, and charge air coolant needs to operate at much lower temperatures than engine coolant. This is why the correct order of heat exchangers in the airflow is so important.

Steve had done all the research into the high output powertrain and its requirements by speaking to people such as Kenne Bell and Sean Hyland in North America, as well as Dreadnought in the UK. From his research Steve



**ABOVE:** The new 520hp engine and Tremec TKO 600 gearbox is finally ready to fit.

was aware of the vehicle's strengths and weaknesses when putting that much power through the driveline. The tailshaft, driveshafts and final drive system were all capable of taking the power, but some of the rear suspension arms were not up to it and failures had occurred even on the standard 260hp engine. Steve supplied me with the necessary uprated components, modifications and literature that were needed to keep everything together. The suspension bushes were changed to the less compliant urethane, and a big brake conversion is scheduled for installation after larger wheels and tyres are fitted.

Two systems, called Boost-a-Spark and Boost-a-Pump, are a necessary upgrade for the Kenne Bell supercharging system. These modules are fitted inline into the fuel pump and ignition coil 12v power supply circuits. When any modified engine is under high load, correct fuel supply and pressure

is critical otherwise the mixture will lean off and cause catastrophic engine failure. Also, under high load conditions more electrical energy is required to make the spark jump the electrode gap. The Boost-a systems allow modifiers to use the factory fitted ignition and fuel systems by increasing their output by over 50%. This saves on costly fuel and ignition upgrades and keeps the installation neat.

How it achieves this task is very simple. Each module is basically one big capacitor and transformer. Under normal driving conditions the fuel and ignition systems run without interference from the Boost modules and the system's original electrical supply charges the capacitors within the modules. The Boost-a-Spark module has a MAP sensor incorporated internally which is connected to the intake manifold via a standard vacuum hose and take-off port. Because the



**1 & 2:** An adaptor plate was machined from a solid block of aluminium so that the MG's concentric clutch slave could be used.  
**3 & 4:** Boost-a-Pump module was mounted by the fuel pump control module in the boot and then covered by the tool tray.  
**5 & 6:** Big 4in air intake hose was being squashed out of shape, so the chassis rail and subframe both had to be modified.



**ABOVE AND BELOW:** Adapter plate being fabricated to facilitate the required new gear linkage position...



fuel pump is normally located at the rear of the vehicle, the Boost-a-Pump uses a pressure sensor on the inlet manifold and transmits the MAP signal electronically to the module. When the MAP sensors sense a positive pressure in the intake manifold, a higher supply voltage is delivered to the fuel pump and ignition coils. This voltage increases proportionally as the boost pressure and subsequent engine load increases.

An ignition coil is basically a transformer, and any increase in primary voltage leads to an increase in secondary voltage, and subsequently creates a stronger spark across the electrode gap. A dashboard-mounted dial knob is also available to manually



**ABOVE:** ...while further modification of Ford and MG parts as well as a few bespoke widgets were required before the gear stick would exit in exactly the right spot.

control the ignition output, which is especially useful for older ignition systems where the high-tension leads are subject to failure and cross firing at these higher voltages.

For the fuel pump, an increase in voltage to it increases the impeller speed. Higher impeller speeds mean a greater fuel volume is delivered to the injectors, the increase in fuel volume meaning the fuel pressure can be maintained when the injectors are at peak flow. Testing has shown no adverse effects on the electrical components, as the pump and coils can operate safely within a 10-18v range. The Boost-a-Pump system can supply up to 17.5v at full boost, which equates to a 75% increase in fuel flow.

We mounted the Boost-a-Spark module in the firewall plenum void close to the ignition coil supply harness, but out of sight. The control knob was located beside the cruise control switch on the centre console. The Boost-a-Pump module was mounted adjacent to the fuel pump control module in the boot and completely hidden from view by being neatly encased by the factory tool kit blow moulded storage tray.

The ZT V8 uses a completely different sump to the Mustang V8 – cast aluminium instead of steel, and with the oil pan at the opposite end of the engine block. Luckily the oil pick up could be swapped without too much effort and the sump bolted on.

Steve had purchased a 90mm MAF sensor and 100mm intake hoses to be installed with the kit – even though the throttle housing was only 75mm, this was the recommended intake sizing.

Locating the K&N air filter and being able to squeeze the huge 4in diameter hoses into an already over-crowded engine bay proved to be a challenge. It was imperative that the hoses were not distorted, otherwise the effect of the large bore would have been completely lost.

The only location for the air filter was in the void of the front bar behind the righthand driving lamp and in front of the wheelarch mould. I personally wanted it mounted higher to eliminate the ingress of water if driving through a deep puddle, but this would have required a long and complex hose run. There was not enough room for the



**ABOVE AND CIRCLED:** This ZT really is the proverbial wolf in sheep's clothing. Even on the inside, the extra dials were integrated discreetly into the factory dash.





« 100mm hose to fit between the chassis rail and front subframe, so material had to be cut away from both and the area reinforced where necessary. After a bit of massaging, everything fitted and the finished look isn't that dissimilar to the original intake run, except I would have preferred a neutral looking black hose rather than the 'look-at-me' bright blue.

Steve's last request was for three extra gauges – fuel, oil and manifold pressure. Again, not wanting the add-on look, these were squeezed into the area above the radio in the centre console. The radio had to be lowered to create enough space above, but the end result is pleasingly ergonomic.

Volumetric flow theory states that if more air goes into the engine, then more gases have to be exhausted, so a new high flow exhaust system was required. The area around the exhaust manifolds was so tight that my exhaust manufacturer, Craig Stallard from Quality Performance Exhausts, recommended keeping the factory manifolds, but from there back running a mandrel-bent twin 2½in stainless system. Two high flow catalytic convertors were incorporated as the engine management system runs four oxygen sensors – two are lambda upstream sensors and the other two are diagnostic downstream ones. Not using the correct catalytic convertors would almost certainly cause error codes to be logged, unless an aftermarket programmable ECU was used. The 2½in pipe size was chosen purely because that was the maximum size capable of fitting between the rear subframe and body. Special bespoke straight through mufflers had to be manufactured, as the correct (ie. very loud) exhaust note was of vital importance to Steve. After 60 hours of fabrication and cursing, Craig delivered a stunning exhaust system. It's



**ABOVE:** Custom-made 2½in stainless exhaust with twin cats is a work of art. **RIGHT:** 2½in pipes were a tight squeeze between the rear subframe and body.

just a shame it is hidden away from view.

The MG uses the Ford Mustang factory engine wiring harness, engine sensors and engine computer (ECU). The Mustang ECU is capable of being remapped, thus eliminating the need for an expensive aftermarket ECU and associated dyno time. Sean Hyland had already dyno tuned the engine before it was shipped to Australia and the remapping programme was supplied with the package. The programme was stored on a small hand-held electronic device similar to a cheap OBD scan tool. All that was required was for the electronic device to be connected to the vehicle's OBD2 connector and the on-screen download procedure followed.

## John Murray – On the Road

Getting into this MG is not the normal contorted procedure that I associate with the marque and my slightly oversize frame fits nicely into the supportive seats. I depress the very heavy clutch and turn the ignition key. Instantly the engine bursts into life and settles into a smooth idle, but the exhaust burble does not match the smooth idle and sounds as though the engine is fitted with a long duration camshaft profile. I slowly release the clutch and the car moves away without any use of the throttle.

Acceleration is smooth and the gear changes precise. The car drives normally except for a deep drone from the exhaust. Once it is warmed up I decide to use the loud pedal, but only for a split second, then something goes very wrong – the engine starts spluttering and the car vibrating, warning lights on the dash are flashing and the car has lost all power. Shaun reaches over and turns the traction control switch to OFF. 'Try it now,' he says.

So I do, and woah – the tachometer races



toward the red line. I grab second and the revs fly up again, but we stop accelerating as the wheels start spinning. I grab third and back off the accelerator a bit, at which point the car steps back into line and propels itself at great pace along the deserted road. Shaun explains that the new wheels and tyres have not arrived yet and that the standard rubber is ageing; this, combined with the huge engine torque, causes havoc with the slow-acting and outdated traction control system.

After 20 minutes of driving, I feel at one with the car. It is easy to drive in slow moving traffic (except for the heavy clutch), lightning fast when accelerating and super smooth when cruising. My only complaint is that I feel the exhaust is too loud and booms irritatingly during high speed cruising, and the brakes will definitely need upgrading if this beast is to be driven in anger.

On our return trip it starts to drizzle and as we climb a slight rise in the road at 90kp/h in fourth gear I depress the accelerator firmly. I watch the boost gauge start to rise, and then bam – the tachometer lurches upward, the tail end becomes very loose and then steps out violently. I lift off, the aging tyres grip and the rear snaps back. I grab fifth and sedately finished the journey. I think to myself: 'I have tamed this wild horse, I am now its master,' but my heart beat and clammy hands would disagree. ®

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**ABOVE:** This is how most people will see the ZT; at least there are four tailpipes for them to admire before it disappears!

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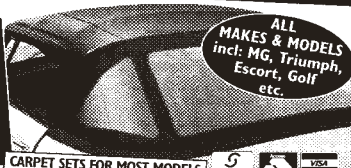
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*Phil Fellows' current MG squeeze is this Mineral Blue MGC Roadster.*



# My MG Story

**Phil Fellows has always been interested in cars – initially Corgi, Dinky and Matchbox, but more recently MGs. However, this story starts with a Triumph Spitfire!**

**D**o you remember the days when the MGB was insurance group 6 and the Spitfire and Midget were insurance group 4? Those two points made all the difference, so I started my sports car journey with a Spitfire MkIV – soft top motoring and my first introduction to the magic of overdrive. I had just started as a trainee at Land Rover (then part of British Leyland) and as part of that training I made a set of axle stands that I still have. We also did factory visits, and one of these was to a place called Abingdon – yes it really was that long ago! I must say I don't remember much about the visit, but it obviously pointed me in the right direction, and I did get an MG tie...

Following my training, I didn't stay at Land Rover that long, even though it was working at the V8 plant. Instead I transferred to the mighty Longbridge. I know a lot has been said about Longbridge, but anyone who actually worked there has very fond memories of the people and the place. While I was there, I started my



**ABOVE:** *Phil's first MG was a Glacier White MGB Roadster, which was his daily driver at the time, although he did have a BGT for use in the winter. Not so tough, then...*

MG journey with a 1973 MGB Roadster in Glacier White and a 1966 MGB GT. The Roadster was my daily driver, but I used the BGT during the winter. That was an interesting car, with steel wheels and fibreglass wings. We called

it Hughie because of its registration, and the fact that it was green with orange bits (rust). **[For those who don't remember Opportunity Knocks on TV, Google 'Hughie Green' to make sense of that name – Ed]**





**ABOVE:** 'Hughie' was green – with patches of orange!



**ABOVE:** This Jubilee was Phil's first BGT with a sun roof.



**ABOVE:** Teal Blue BGT was bought with the insurance money after a TR7 was written off.

**RIGHT:** Teal Blue Midget was pressed into service when Phil's BGT was in for a respray in 'Super Taxi Black.'



At this time, I joined Bromsgrove MGOC and also the MG Car Club. Bromsgrove MGOC used to organise runs in convoy to different MG shows. I only led the convoy once and we got seriously lost, with 12 cars heading in all sorts of directions up and down the M6, M5 and A38. We all eventually got to Stanford Hall though, no mean feat in the days before sat navs.

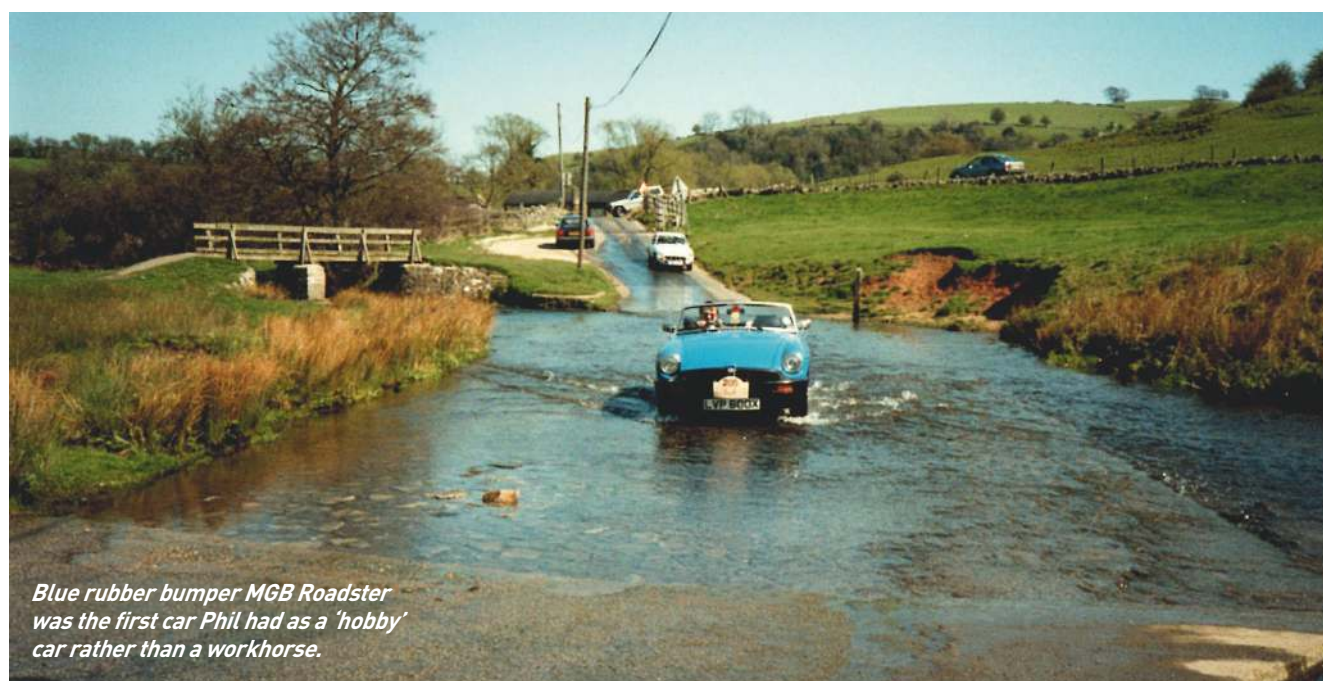
I made friends in the MGOC at this time which I still have today. I am still a member of the MGOC and MGCC, so

every month I get *Enjoying MG*, *Safety Fast* and *MG Enthusiast*. In other words, plenty of MG reading.

I replaced the white MGB with a Jubilee, which was interesting to run, trying to match colours and the side stripes for a small repair. This was the first car I had with a Webasto sunroof. I do like MGB GTs with sunroofs.

The Jubilee was replaced by a TR7, which was written off in an accident, but no one was hurt. Luckily this was the first car I could actually afford to

insure fully comprehensive, so the money went straight into the next MG – a 1974 MGB GT in Teal Blue. Remember that in these days all four cars – the white Roadster, the Jubilee, the TR7 and the Teal Blue MGB GT – only cost around £1300 each. This was when everyone thought the 1974 MGBs were the ones to have, because they had all the kit, but also the chrome bumpers. Following this car, a black rubber bumper MGB GT was »



**Blue rubber bumper MGB Roadster was the first car Phil had as a 'hobby' car rather than a workhorse.**





**LEFT:** BGT V8 was sold when MGA was done.  
**BELOW:** Black rubber bumper BGT sticks in Phil's memory as 'a good car.'  
**RIGHT:** MGA 1600 was a restoration project from Texas.  
**BELOW RIGHT:** Glacier White BGT replaced the ill-fitting MGA.



« purchased. This was a good car, but needed a repaint (Super Taxi Black) and whilst this was happening I used a 1972 Teal Blue MG Midget.

Eventually both cars went, and after a few fallow years with company cars, I next purchased a blue rubber bumper MGB, which was my first MG that was primarily a hobby car. This was used for travelling to various events, including the Cornwall MG Event in September and my first visit to the Kimber Run. I also managed to have an accident in this car, a spin on an uneven road surface that damaged the front and back of the car and both sides of the bridge. The bridge repairs

cost more than the car, and I didn't even get a plaque for my trouble!

This was then replaced with a restoration project, an MGA 1600 from Texas. To this day I can remember the conversation with a friend that preceded this purchase. 'You can restore an MGA for the same cost as an MGB Heritage shell...' Oh how I laugh now, but hindsight is a wonderful thing. Well, following a full restoration and change of colour to red, the MGA was finally finished. I took it on the Kimber Run for its first trip, and it snowed. I did also manage to go to MGA Day in it, a great day at Waddesdon Manor chock full of MGAs.

While I was rebuilding the MGA (with a lot of help it must be said), I also had a Glacier White MGB GT V8. That was a great car, but went when the MGA was finished. However, I soon found out that the MGA and MGB seating positions are different, and that I suit an MGB! So, the MGA had to go.

I next returned to MGB driving with a Glacier White MGB GT, which was then replaced with a Snowberry White MGC. That was another great car, until I took it for a rolling road tune and they pointed out that the engine needed a rebuild. Still, the rebuilt engine made a real difference, and I really liked the way it looked on steel wheels.

You may have noticed by now that I have a bit of a reputation for changing cars. And you only know the half of it – this story is just about the MGs, but there have been lots of other cars sprinkled into the mix too. However, for my next MG I went modern and bought a brand new MGF. This was another really good car and one we had a lot of fun with over the time we owned it. It was eventually replaced with another MGB Roadster, Tartan Red this time with wire wheels and built on a Heritage shell, just about perfect and a credit to the chap who built it. If you ever see the YouTube clip of Quentin Wilson driving an MGB on the old *Top Gear* programme, this was the car, but before my ownership and with a different registration number.

One event we have done a lot of



**ABOVE:** Snowberry White MGC Roadster was another great car, although discovering that the engine needed rebuilding was a blow. At least it went great afterwards!






**ABOVE:** MGB built on a Heritage shell and fitted with wire wheels was a credit to the guy who built it. The car also had a starring role on Top Gear with Quentin Wilson.

Roadster I had sold previously. This was a mistake – never buy back a car, as they are always different and often more tired. But it was still a good car and we used it for a number of events, including the Kimber Run and the Welsh Rallye. I also changed the car from wires to Minilites.

I also had a red MGTF 135 at this time, but it got to the stage where we had four red convertibles – VW Beetle, Midget, MGB and TF. Something had to go, and so we sold the MGB and the TF. I then spent a few years searching for an MG replacement, looking at various cars and eventually buying a Mineral Blue MGC Roadster, just in time for MGC50.

Over the years we have done Midget 50 (rain), MGB 50 (rain), MGC 50 (good weather) and Spridget 60 (rain). And do people remember the MGB Day back in the 1980s, where they used to park the MGBs by colours?

So that is where we are today, with an MGC and Midget, both roadsters (but the Midget isn't mine). I counted them up and I have owned 18 MGs, including lots of MGBs, two MGCs, two Midgets, an MGA, a V8, an MGF and a TF. Given my track record of chopping and changing, friends do wonder why I still have the MGC, but I never know why I buy or sell a car and so I can't really answer that. However, people also ask me what the difference is between an MGB and the MGC. I can answer that one: it's the theatre! 

times over the years is the Kimber Run. We have attended this with many different cars, and seeing all the MGs at the start in Chatsworth Park was always very impressive. Other events include MG Silverstone, although I find it a bit expensive and with too much racing for ordinary members.

Other events we have enjoyed include the MGCC Welsh Rallye, the Snowden Run, MGB Register Runs and Midget Register Runs. More recently of course there is Drive it Day every year, and we have also done Scenic Car

Tours to the Channel Isles and the Isle of Wight (but not at the same time!).

With a house move the MGB had to go, but I seem to have influenced my wife on the subject of convertibles as she now doesn't like GTs, only soft tops. She has run various VW soft tops, but also has a round wheelarch MG Midget, which she has kept longer than I have any of my MGs.

I did then have a dark British racing green MGB GT for a while which I really enjoyed, but it was a GT, so it had to go. I replaced it by buying back the red Heritage-shelled MGB



**ABOVE:** MGF was a rarity in that it was bought new.



**ABOVE:** BRG GT had to go because it wasn't a convertible.



**ABOVE:** TF135 was also on the Fellows drive for a while.



**ABOVE:** The Heritage-shell MGB, second time around.



# In Memory of Phil



Jeremy Veale tells the story of how an MGB GT V8 was lovingly restored in memory of his brother Phil, and how it has got him into MG motoring.

**M**y brother Phil first bought an MG Midget in the late 1970s. That was a 1966 model, and as he had fun with his first one, he decided to upgrade to a 1974 model. He was a keen member of the Bristol MG Club, and when he met his wife Alison in the early 1980s, she also owned a Midget so they were able to share their passion for the cars.

In 1983 when Phil and Alison got engaged, Phil decided to sell the two Midgets and buy a 1973 MGB GTV8. Both Phil and Alison used this car regularly, and the MG did around 6000 miles a year up until February 1998. It was in need of restoration by then, the starter was playing up and it needed some bodywork doing, so my brother parked it up in dad's shed in Devon, leaving it there but saying he would put it back on the road one day when he could afford it.

Phil and Alison also acquired a 1968 MG Midget at some point, which Phil took 10 years to restore. He was very



**ABOVE:** Looking the worse for wear when unearthed from storage in dad's shed.

proud of what he had done, and an article was written about it. This was published in a local paper in High Wycombe, where he was living. This car is still owned and driven by Alison, and their daughters Harriet and Kate.

My brother became unwell in 2010. During the three years he was ill, he got a quote for the restoration of his beloved MGB GTV8, but as he was unable to work, alas he couldn't afford to do it. Sadly Phil passed



away in June 2013. Near the end of his life he was going to let a family friend have the B, but two weeks before he passed away, I said to Phil that I would like to have the V8. He immediately said yes, and seemed very pleased that I wanted it. I thought that I would either sell it and give the money to Alison and the girls, or restore it and keep it myself. Well, when his friend said in his eulogy that Phil never fulfilled his wish to restore the car, I thought that I had to do this for him at whatever cost.

So in June 2014, a year after Phil's death, I collected the V8 from dad's shed in Devon and brought the car back to my home in Martock, Somerset. It was parked on the drive, and any free time would be spent stripping the car, putting all the bits in boxes or jars. Luckily a lady down the road lent me her garage to store the larger pieces, and that enabled me to keep everything in one place. My son gave me a hand in the rain one bank holiday to remove the engine and gearbox from the car. We both got absolutely soaked. That is dedication I suppose, being prepared to get wet to do the job. Or maybe just plain daft.

I intended to restore the car myself, but then I thought that because of spending time with grandchildren and looking after elderly parents, time would not be available to do a proper job. So I started getting quotes, and in the MGOC Suppliers booklet, Chard Vintage and Sports Car Services caught my eye. I gave them a call, and Tim Whellock came to view the car. We had a long chat discussing his ideas of which avenue to go down to



**ABOVE AND LEFT:** Jeremy stripped the shell before it was collected by the restorers; a trip through the tanks at Surface Processing Ltd then took it to another level of stripped.

get a good job done, and after visiting his premises, I decided to use them to help me fulfil my brother's wish to restore his beloved car.

So in early January 2015, after the shell had been totally stripped, Tim collected it from my drive and took it to his workshop. After talking to Tim some more, he suggested sending it to Surface Processing Ltd of Dudley to be chemically stripped. When the shell came back, the paint strip revealed more jobs which needed

doing, but that was to be expected.

After fitting all the necessary new panels and after Tim's righthand man Martin had spent hours getting every little imperfection out of the original metal, the shell was then sent back to S.P.L for another go through their stripping tanks to get the coating off the new panels so that everything was completely paint free before being electroplated.

When it returned, the car was then totally rebuilt, repainted in the original colour of Glacier White but with the interior changed from Autumn Leaf to black. It was finally MoT'd for the first time in almost 18½ »



**ABOVE:** Nothing was skimped on what was to be a total restoration to honour Phil.



**ABOVE:** At last the great day arrived when Jeremy could collect the keys and drive his brother's BGT V8 home.





**ABOVE:** Since restoration, the MG has been shown at a number of events.

« years, and I collected the finished MGB GT V8 on June 10th, 2016. It was a very proud moment for me, fulfilling my brother's wish to have his MG restored and completing it exactly three years after the day he died. On June 12th I took the car to its first show, at Ilminster in Somerset, where several people admired the car and remarked on the first class restoration job that had been done.

The next trip was a run down to dad's house in north Devon where the car had been stored for so many years, to show him the finished article. I think it brought a tear to his eye, as no parent expects their children to die before them.

The next show was Martock Retro Day, which is held in our village and attracts over 300 classic vehicles from



**ABOVE:** The V8 reunited with the Midget that Alison still drives and cherishes.

**RIGHT:** The MG is popular with three generations of the Veale family.




all over the UK. At this event again the V8 was greatly complimented on its looks. One visitor said to me that he was looking to buy a fully restored MGB GT V8, and asked if I would sell. He would have paid a figure in the mid-£20,000 range, but I told him the story of how I acquired the car, why it was restored and that it will never be sold in my lifetime.

In 2017 we reunited the MGB GT V8 with my brother's 1968 Midget and took both cars to MG Live at Silverstone, which was great as both cars used to attend this event in the past. I have taken the car to Haynes Breakfast Club on occasions, again getting lots of interest. I have also showed the car to the person who was going to have it from my brother originally. He said that even

though he was a mechanic and his son-in-law could do bodywork, after seeing the photographs of the work in progress and the finished car, they would probably not have done as good a job, which was very gracious of him.

I became a member of the Yeovil Car Club in 2017 and I felt very honoured to be asked by the Chairman if I would like to put the car on the indoor stand at the Bristol Classic Car Show at Shepton Mallet in 2018. While there, it received a lot of interest, including one person who recognised the car as he had been friends with Phil when my brother was in the Bristol MG Owners Club; it is a small world.

On 23rd September 2018 my son James and I took part in the Bristol area MGOC's autumn run. I gave James a big surprise that day by allowing him to have his first drive in it, covering over 200 miles which he enjoyed. During the morning, the car's mileometer clocked 100,000.

My wife Caroline and also our grandchildren enjoy riding in the car too when they can. I did not know how I would feel driving what was Phil's car as he is no longer here, but I am very proud to have fulfilled his restoration wish and I love driving it. I hope that Phil would be very pleased that I have done this for him. I never thought that I would own a classic car, especially a rare one such as this, but now the car will always stay in our family ownership. 



**ABOVE:** The restored BGT V8 looking absolutely superb, and Jeremy's son James who was delighted to be handed the keys when the two took part in a club run.





## MGB

### Engines

1800cc lead free	£2020
1800cc fast road balanced	£2339
1840cc balanced stage 2	£2720
1950cc standard lead free	£2650
1950cc fast road stage 2	£2990

### Heads

Standard lead free	£505
Stage 2 lead free	£599
Stage 3 lead free	£739
Stage 3a lead free	£830
Stage 4 comp head	£2800

### Other

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- Oselli cast rocker cover £175
- Weber carb kit £799
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### Heads

Standard lead free	£505
Stage 2 lead free	£599
Stage 3 lead free	£739
Stage 3a lead free	£850
Stage 4 comp head	£2800

### Other

- Tubular long branch exhaust
- Oselli cast rocker cover £175
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## Q&A

*Have you got a technical problem with your MG? If so, the combined expertise of Roger Parker and the MGOC Workshop may be able to help. For details of how to access this free service, see below.*

# Is overdrive or a fifth gear best?

**Q** I have a 1500 Midget and want to upgrade the gearing. I've seen the Ford Type 9 conversions, but they are very expensive (£2800) compared to the value of the car, and so I wonder why MG never offered the Midget with the same overdrive gearbox as was offered in the Spitfire? Can I buy a Spitfire OD gearbox and fit it in the Midget, or does the Ford gearbox have other benefits that justify the cost?

**A** Two basic reasons dictate going down the Ford Type 9 gearbox route. The main one is that the five-speed can be fitted in a non-invasive way into the Midget body, so if there was ever a need or desire to return it to standard, then this is a simple bolt-in operation. By comparison the use of a Spitfire or Dolomite 1500 OD gearbox demands the transmission tunnel be cut and welded mods added, so this is a permanent change and not an easy one to reverse.

This was never done by BL because it would have required certification, and they were in cash strapped times when the 1500 Midget was being developed. That hasn't stopped some intrepid owners from following this route, just as you see many cars with different engines fitted, but as with any non-standard homespun conversion, there are a number other compatibility issues to overcome and it appears that in typical BL style the 'same' gearbox found in a range of cars is not always the same in all respects!

Looking at comments from the few who have done this specific conversion,


it appears that there are fewer differences and additional mods or work required when the donor car's age is the same as the recipient, but spread the age gap and there are potentially more hurdles to overcome. That is not an issue with the Ford Type 9 conversion as everything comes in a box to enable a straightforward bolt-in conversion, only the speedometer then having to be recalibrated to suit the individual car's gearing. Doing your own OD conversion means not only modifying the tunnel and including considerations for normal gearbox servicing access, but also having to source a different length propshaft, longer speedo cable, speedo recalibration, and possibly a new clutch and different/modified gear stick, the last two possibly being different depending on age.

The other very big advantage for the Ford gearbox conversion is that it has a very solid reliability record, something which can't be said of the Midget 1500 gearbox. This is an important point, as the reliability of this gearbox in Triumph models seems to be noticeably better than effectively the same series of gearbox when in a Midget, something that is almost certainly down to the confines of the Midget body not allowing the same cooling airflow. I suspect that heat is driving the reduced reliability, while the Ford's solid reliability record means it is better placed to cope with a hotter working environment.

There is also the very important aspect of finding secondhand Triumph parts, which is your only option today.

Assuming you can get hold of a secondhand gearbox with OD, then you can take the risk of fitting them without stripping and reconditioning, but in view of the known weaknesses of these gearboxes, common sense dictates that both should be reconditioned.

That is immediately going to be an expense of well over £1100 when buying exchange rebuilt units from a reputable source (plus of course the cost of buying the core units to exchange). Add a new clutch and propshaft along with other incidentals and a minimum cost of £1500 or higher is a reasonable assumption. And that is before fitting, so there is not the big cost saving that at first appeared possible. At least now with fully reconditioned or new parts you are actually comparing like for like.

The end result of either route is certainly a considerable cruising advantage in modern traffic conditions as the overdrive ratio and Ford fifth gear ratios are essentially similar and provide a very useful drop in engine revs. The general problem for the Midget, especially those with the lower final drive ratios, is that the car's comfortable cruising speed is within the zone occupied by heavy traffic, which can be an uncomfortable and intimidating presence around a Midget. Having this longer gearing just moves the Midget's comfortable cruising speed above that intimidation zone, and this does make a big difference. That is before any fuel saving advantages, which in truth will take a long time and many miles before paying for the conversion. 



The MG Owners' Club Workshop is based at the MGOC Headquarters at Swavesey, Cambridge and offers a complete range of services to meet all your MG requirements. Tel: 01954 231125 [www.mgownersclub.co.uk](http://www.mgownersclub.co.uk)



The MG Enthusiast Helpline is brought to you by Roger Parker and the technical team at the MGOC workshop, who kindly provide the expertise to solve your problems. So if you are having trouble with your MG and need some help, please send full details to:

**Karen Drury, MG Enthusiast, Kelsey Media, Cudham Tithe Barn, Berrys Hill, Cudham, Kent TN16 3AG** or email them to [mg.ed@kelsey.co.uk](mailto:mg.ed@kelsey.co.uk)

We will reply to all queries as quickly as possible, but some questions may require research so please allow up to 28 days. Please note that this is a free service, and some complex questions may require more time than we can reasonably allow, in which case we will let you know.

Neither MG Enthusiast nor the MGOC can accept liability for loss, damage or injury resulting from replies to readers' queries.

# Falling in Love

Mike Garrett has taken the very sleek MGA and tweaked it slightly to unleash the full potential of the latent beauty lurking within.

**T**his is a 1959 Australian-assembled MGA 1600 in its original Mamba Black, which was first registered on the road in Melbourne in 1960. Prior to me purchasing it last year, two previous owners had kept it straight and in good working order for nearly 60 years. In fact, before the rego ran out last November, my wife and I enjoyed several chilly winter road trips up to the Yarra Valley on the original motor.

In Australia at least, I think MGAs still represent astonishing value for money, with good examples still to be found for the same numbers in Australian dollars as they are fetching in the UK in Pounds Sterling. However, this story really begins with a BGT. I inherited (or was perhaps indoctrinated with) my father's love of the MG marque, and with a surname beginning with 'G', I was always going to be christened Michael, Matthew or Mark. Given Melbourne's unpredictable weather, my first MG and daily driver for the last eight years has been a 1969 MGB GT, which was repainted by the previous owner Porsche Guards Red. The first time I saw it, I was in love.

Since that time, I have had the engine reconditioned, some bodywork done, a stereo and rear seatbelts for my children installed, and a sports muffler added.



I still get a thrill every morning when I turn the key. And whilst my gangly teenage daughter can no longer fold her legs into the back, I have enjoyed several family outings in the GT over the years with my wife and three children; I have had to keep them lean!

However, whilst certainly less practical, I have always preferred the lines and curves of the A over the B. Indeed, I think the MGA is history's most beautiful affordable classic car. I first saw this one sitting forlorn and awaiting a new owner at MG Workshops whilst getting my B serviced. My six year old son was with me at the time, and after we took it for a test spin, it only seemed fair he be indoctrinated with the MG bug too. Against my better judgement (and without consulting my wife – oops,) I bought it on the spot.


Whilst the MGA was built as a roadster, it was let down (in my humble opinion) by quaint front and rear bumpers that interrupted its stellar feminine curves, and also by the size of the engine, which was underpowered for something potentially so sleek. I think that as well as performing better, the early Sebring cars looked so much better. And, as well as being pricier, I have read mixed stories regarding the later twin cam MGAs.

And so it seemed best to replace

the original engine with one more familiar to me, a reconditioned 1798cc motor from another 1969 MGB. We also exchanged the old gearbox for something newer with five speeds.

Andrew McDowell and his team at MG Workshops in Melbourne were completely open to my ideas on reconfiguring the car into a more menacing roadster. Fortunately there are still enough MGs in circulation for new parts and fittings to be freely available. After an immaculate new paint job, we found a chrome rear luggage rack, Monza fuel cap, mesh grill and new Frogeye Sprite rear bumper over-riders to accentuate the A's beautiful rear rump left bare without a bumper.

However the most important modification for me was ditching the roof (so sacrificing the all-weather capabilities of the car) and cutting down the windscreen to a shape more roadster than Noddy. And whilst steel vented wheels might have been more fitting, I can't get past the beauty of wires.

The interior needed nothing altering except a smaller (wooden) steering wheel, and whilst this is certainly no purist's cup of tea, sitting in it still feels very 1950s while driving it feels alive, free and very 1970s. And its looks? Well they are elegant, dark, sexy and timeless. I am in love all over again. 





# MGs in the Park 2019

For 21 years, Oxfordshire MG Owners Club have put on what's become the largest free one-day MG event in the country. This year it is taking place on 9th June, and we asked organisers Peter Mapson and Pete McHugh to tell us a little about it.



**T**his event was started by John and Jean King, who ran it for the first 19 years. That was a heroic achievement, so when the Kings decided they wanted to take a step back and start enjoying the event as regular visitors rather than running it, we put together an organising committee for the 2018 event.

We clearly had some big shoes to fill, because MGs in the Park has grown into such a notable event in the MG calendar for enthusiasts from all clubs, not just our own. It has become the largest free one-day MG event in the country, and we like to think also one of the friendliest, which was obviously something we wanted to continue. We also wished to see it grow further – last year we welcomed nearly

600 MGs despite a very poor weather forecast, and this year we hope to beat that total. Luckily we always have a great turnout of volunteers, so there will be plenty of marshals on hand to direct people around the site as smoothly and efficiently as possible.

And what a site! The event always takes place at the 160-acre Cotswold Wildlife Park, and this has been a key ingredient in its success. For one thing there is plenty of space for everyone, (all we would ask is that if owners would like to park together as a group, please could they turn up together,) while for another all the staff at the Park have become very enthusiastic supporters of our event and offer free entry to all MG drivers on the day, as well as offering a reduced rate for MG passengers of just £11.50 for adults and £8 for children to the Wildlife Park and the fabulous gardens – entry to the MG event within the grounds is then free. Having this superb family-friendly attraction as the event's location ensures there is so much to see and do whatever your level of MG addiction; kids in particular will love the meerkats, Humboldt penguins, Asiatic lions, Morelet's crocodiles, red panda, white rhino and other animals!



On the MG side, we do aim to have a range of attractions. One popular event is the Pride of Ownership, which caters to all models spread across 15 classes. This is a far more relaxed affair than a full-on concours, and we have very deliberately set out to ensure that it does not take up people's whole day. Instead it should be done and dusted during the morning, leaving owners then free to enjoy the rest of the event. They might, for example, want to join the run that we organise in the afternoon, generally of about 25 miles through the beautiful Cotswolds. For this we choose a different route each year, but it is always a fun scenic tour rather than anything challenging, and it will get you back to the Park by 4pm.

As well as the cars and the Wildlife Park, we are also offering a wide range of trade stands to suit all tastes, from the








MG Owners Club to Waterperry Opera Festival. We already have more than 16 traders signed up for this year, and we are pleased to say MGs on Track will be there too. Visitors are welcome to bring along any unwanted MG bits and display them for sale beside their car as well. Dogs are welcome on leads and picnics are fine, though the Park also has many quality food outlets, and you may be tempted by the tremendous artisan bakery or homemade fudge stands that are often hidden among the trade stalls.

We should just add one note of advice for getting to the event; the main route for visitors from the north is via the A40, but getting through Burford itself can be a challenge to traffic when it is busy. In that case, we would recommend that people find an alternative route around the town and then approach the Wildlife Park from the south.

There is no need to book tickets in advance, just turn up on the day and you will be assured of a warm welcome. The postcode for the Cotswold Wildlife Park is OX18 4JP, and you can find further details about the event on our website at [www.oxfordshiremgoc.co.uk](http://www.oxfordshiremgoc.co.uk) 


# The Welsh Rallye

**N**ow in its 23rd year, the MG Car Club – Midland Centre's Welsh (Touring) Rallye continues to be very popular and takes participants to some hidden gems of Wales that folk might not normally venture to on their own. The event was started in May 1997 by then Centre Chairman, Rick Howson, as a non-competitive variant of the proper rallies that the Centre used to run many moons ago in the 1950/60s – hence the Rallye spelling to differentiate it as non-competitive, and then the addition of 'Touring' to indicate that it was held under an MSA Touring Assembly Certificate of Exemption. Its main aim has always been to give drivers who like to use their classic cars a decent run on roads that would not usually be visited on one's own, and be of a length to be interesting and challenging rather than just a tootle round the block.

The first 18 years were mainly one-nighters, meaning that the Saturday start was from somewhere in the West Midlands and headed west to finish at

various hotels in Wales large enough to accommodate a group of some 50+ cars. Distances of the runs varied slightly, but were usually in the region of 160-180 miles.

In 2015, after the success of the Anniversary Peake Rallye which was a two-nighter based on Buxton, it was decided to try a two-nighter Welsh Rallye, initially on an alternate year basis. However, this proved so popular and it has continued in this format, with the main run still on the Saturday. As nearly all folk were now already on site mileages varied, but aimed at 150-160, with four parts or stages of around 40 miles each and three controls or refreshment stops.

The next event is scheduled to be held over the weekend of 17-19 May 2019 and will be based on Llangollen, with a Saturday run to northwest Wales and Snowdonia. Entries are coming in fast, but at the time of writing there are still places available. For more details of the weekend package and an entry form, please contact [rogerking43@gmail.com](mailto:rogerking43@gmail.com) or phone 0121 476 6649. 





# In the rear view mirror

In his last issue as editor, Simon Goldsworthy reflects on the various MGs that have come and gone over the last 13 very enjoyable years at the helm of *MG Enthusiast*



It all started with a V-reg rubber bumper BGT in bright yellow, a typically cheap example that had a couple of years left in it before some serious investment would be required. It wasn't long before this car was converted to body-coloured fibreglass bumpers that were being sold by a specialist at the time, but which have since gone out of production. I'm not really a big fan of spending money on cosmetic enhancements, but they looked good and were certainly always a talking point when meeting other enthusiasts. It is in this guise that the car always lives on in my mind, but I loved that B from the start, seduced by its combination of superb looks and supreme practicality. So much so that it first appeared in the June 2006 issue, and I kept it for 5½ years, details of its sale only appearing in the February 2012 magazine.

For me, that was a new record on longevity. In fact, I can't recall any car before that which I'd kept for more than a couple of years. Over those years of BGT ownership, the MG underwent a body restoration and full respray that was detailed in the magazine, and if I say so myself it was something of a looker. It was also a great car to drive, and a personal highlight was a camping trip to the Czech Republic with a mate. We covered 2000 miles in under a week, and to this day I can remember the eager anticipation I felt to get back behind the



wheel when we touched land back in the UK. I also recall that it took part in the opening ceremony for the London 2012 Olympics in the care of its next owner.

I sold the B in part because I thought I should spread my wings and try something new in the magazine. That something new was a purple MGF, which first appeared in the August 2011 issue. I really appreciated the driving dynamics of that car and the Amaranth paint was a big hit with the ladies of the family, but I have to admit that it didn't have the same wow factor for me as a full-on classic from the Abingdon era.

It also had a very stiff clutch pedal, and the solution was ultimately to pull the engine and gearbox and fit a new actuating arm. The intricacies of working with a mid-engine layout and Hydragas suspension made me long for the simplicity of the B, but I can't deny that for a cheap and cheerful car, the MGF drove superbly and owning it was a hugely enjoyable experience.

By the time the MGF moved on in the July 2013 issue, I had already bought a second MG in the shape of a 2003 ZT CDTi. Never having been into large or luxurious cars, it took some time before



I stopped thinking that my father had come to visit every time I saw the ZT on my drive! However, I soon came to appreciate its many virtues, and proof of that is in the figures. It didn't move on until the November 2018 issue, which means that in my life I have only ever had one car for longer, (the Herald that I still possess). In those six years the ZT fulfilled a variety of roles – family transport for five, zipping up and down the country on photoshoots, taking rubbish to the dump and going on holidays through Europe to name just a few. The ZT had 100,000 miles on the clock when I bought it, and I added no fewer than 55,000 miles to that total, all of them in supreme comfort. That is far more than I have ever driven in any other single car, and a record that I think is unlikely to be beaten.

While the ZT was working away in the background, two other MGs came and went. In the June 2014 issue I introduced a bargain basement chrome bumper BGT. It cost me £1100 and was, to say the least, cosmetically challenged. But here's the strange thing – despite having fibreglass wings, a door mirror held on by a wooden block and numerous other failings, it was an absolute

delight to drive. I kept that car until the November 2015 issue, by which time it was clear that some serious investment was required. I sold it to Kelsey Media, the publisher of *MGE*, and it was then featured as a project in other titles.

Because it was still effectively owned in-house, I was able to borrow it back to take part in the Solway Historic Rally as detailed in the January 2016 issue. I then bought it back briefly when Kelsey were done with the project, largely to

save it from being broken for spares. I was able to find a new home for it with a professional bodywork specialist, and am delighted to report that it has finally received the proper full body restoration that it always needed and fully deserved.

In the meantime, I was privileged to own what may well be the most immaculate car that will ever pass through my grubby hands. This was a very early MG Metro in Cinnabar Red with just 21,000 miles on the clock. The »







« downside of this perfection was that I was reluctant to use it, not least because after each trip out I felt obliged to spend hours with the polishing cloths to return the Metro to its pristine condition.

That didn't stop me entering it into an Autotest organised by the Lincolnshire Centre of the MGCC though, probably the hardest the car had been pushed in its entire life. The Metro took this in its stride, though my memory proved unequal to the task and I think I took more wrong turns than right ones. I also took it on a Drive It Day run to Gunby Hall, and was surprised when the Metro was selected by staff there as the car they would most like to take home.

The only downsides I remember of this car were the lack of fifth gear making long distance cruising somewhat strained, and bucket seats that were surprisingly on the tight side of comfortable. Eventually I sold it to ex-MGE contributor and current General Manager of the MG Car Club, Adam Sloman, its passing being recorded in the October 2016 issue.

I then spent a while with just the ZT, before in April 2017 scratching the BGT itch once more and buying a Harvest Gold example. This was a very nice car, but did not stay with me for more than a year. I do not recall exactly why it went so quickly, but suspect there were a



number of reasons. For one thing I had amassed too many cars and put most of them up for sale in a bid to cut the number down to a more sensible level, and the BGT just happened to be one of the first to attract an acceptable bid.

The other impetus for change was that my wife, while extremely tolerant of my MG affliction, has no interest in classic cars and no real desire to go out in them. In fact, the only car that I've ever brought home about which she has expressed an interest is the F/TF. I never need much encouragement to buy another car, so when she asked: 'Why don't you get one of those newer MGs if they are so cheap?' I wouldn't mind going out in that, I duly dived into the classifieds and found a very tidy TF135 in Rio Red. The irony is that I don't think my wife has been out in it for more than a handful of miles, but I am using it as my frontline driver and loving every moment behind the wheel.

However, there is also talk of getting another MGB GT. (Talk that I must admit does not yet include my wife!) For me, that is still the ultimate practical classic. Cheap to run, easy to work on, perfectly capable of being pressed into regular use, immense fun to drive and beautiful to behold, what's not to like? Just rest assured that if I do succumb to temptation, you will be able to read all about it here in *MG Enthusiast*. ®





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7912

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**1971, 2,000 miles, £14,750.** Fully rally prepared Midget. 1375cc race engine, roll cage, safety belts, bash plates, etc. Over £38,000 spent in preparation, competitive classic rally car. All hard work done. Please call 07808 364238, Gloucestershire.

5413

### MIDGET



**1978, £4,495.** Black with sand/black trim. Converted to chrome with leather seats, roll over bar and Minilites. Lowered to c/b height. Really good body, hood and hood cover. Excellent engine, drives really well. Please call 01953 717618 (T).

6498

## MIDGET



**1978, 95,000 miles, £2,995.** Good condition, re-sprayed 3 years ago. MoT until July 2019 and has just been recently serviced. Please call 01283 337625, Derby. 4771

## MIDGET



**1975, £3,450.** MoT and tax exempt. Very good bodywork. Looks and drives superb. Good hood, full length tonneau and a sound investment. Please call 07510 307604, Thornton. 4522

## MGA

### MGA



**1960, \$22,000.** Red, wire wheels, older restoration that holds up well. Please call 1-917-838-9431 or marcsteve00@gmail.com.

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**£32,500.** This competitive MGA race car built and campaigned by the current owner for many years, this MGA has all aluminium front and rear wings, floors, front valance, transmission tunnel, rear internal panel as well as standard bonnet boot and doors. Please call 01420 564343, Medstead (T). 7928

## MGA 1500 ROADSTER



**1957, £23,995.** Finished in red with black red piped leather upholstery. This car has been upgraded with the fitting of a 5 speed gearbox. Although not showroom condition it is very presentable and usable. A luggage rack is already fitted to the boot lid and complete weather equipment. Please call 01590 612999, Hampshire (T). 7910

## MGA 1500 ROADSTER



**1959, £26,995.** Old English white with black white piped leather upholstery. This car has been improved with choice upgrades including a heater, electronic ignition, chrome wire wheels and chrome luggage rack. Please call 01590 612999, Hampshire (T). 7911

## MGA COUPE

**£1,800 ONO.** One owner for 20 years. Last restoration approx. 25 years ago and wire wheels. Please call 01369 810312. 7428

## MGB

### MGB



**1980, 55,500 miles, £5,500.** Black, very good condition, records and receipts, garaged and dry use only. MoT 08/2019, leather seats, Moto-Lita, s/steel exhaust, tonneau cover, Minilites, original Rostyles overdrive and many new parts. Please call 07921 069535, Leicestershire. 6282

### MGB



**1972, £10,500.** Restoration completed in 2013. Unleaded with overdrive, K&N filters, oil cooler, Moto-lita, many upgrades and very good condition. No rust and large history file. Please call 01768 398315, Cumbria. 5100

### MGB GT



**1969, 81,000 miles, £8,500 Ono.** Resprayed, wire wheels, new tyres and tubes. O/S rear wing, tailgate and rear bumper, waxed and oiled. New interior, seats and door. Please call 07971 808066, Dorset. 2288

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## MGB GT



**£3,750 ONO.** Good condition, black leather seats. Runs and drives very nice. Please call 07817 399941, Powys. 5108

## MGB GT



**1977, 42,300 miles, £2,450.** Free tax and MoT. Electronic ignition. Very sound underneath. Working over drive. Minilites mechanically very sound. Good interior with sunroof and seatbelts. Please call 01535 644493, West Yorkshire 7964.

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**£21,500.** Re-shelled in the 90's, recently refreshed with full 'glass out' re-paint. Near concours condition. Recent rebuilt clutch, gearbox and overdrive. MGOC parabolic springs with telescopic dampers. Please call 01752 851217, Plymouth. 6430

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**1973, 65,541 miles, £9,750.** Finished in orange with a black trim and a walnut dash. Motolita steering wheel, last owner from 23 years, MoT from 1986 and full history included for parts and labour. Boot carpeted, front and rear MG mud flaps, chrome luggage rack. Please call 01514 267709, Merseyside. 1714

## MGB ROADSTER



**1972, 54,000 miles, £12,750.** New bodysell engine bored out for 2 litre Oselli head camshaft, AIYD lager carbs, stainless exhaust, Spax adjustable shock (front and rear), 5 new wire wheels and hood. Please call 07852 961290. 6137

## MGB ROADSTER



**1968, £13,500 ONO.** Rebuilt 2007. Oslo blue, mohair hood, grey leather, walnut dash, detailed engine bay, chrome wheels and new tyres. Please call 01302 772140, South Yorks. 6550

## MG ROADSTER



**1974, £15,000.** Heritage Shell MG registered. 11k from rebuild. Exceptional condition with chrome wires, walnut dash and trim, garaged, full tonneau cover and a Chelsea pewter colour with blue leather interior. Lovely car. Please call 07817 451360, West Yorks. 6861

## MGC

## MGC GT



**1968, 80,000 miles, £22,500.** British racing green. Beautiful and rare MGC GT in superb condition throughout. The car was comprehensively restored in late 80's and fully re-sprayed again in 2011. Please call 07772 703666, Aberdeen. 6074

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**1968, £23,000.** Superbly restored, featured on magazine covers. New pewter metallic paintwork. Red leather, reclining seats. Lightened balanced engine. Burgess gas-flowed head. Triple webber 45 carbs. Electric ignition, Power steering and alloy wheels. Please email mawright333@gmail.com, Kent. 7896

## MGF/TF

## MGF



**1998, 64,400 miles, £800 ONO.** 118bhp, Tahiti Blue, petrol, manual MoT until July 2019, part service history, owned since 2004, 2 previous owners, interior chrome kit, alarm, immobiliser, driver, passenger airbags, central locking and CD player. Bonnet has some paint lacquer damage. Please call 07825 249322, Surrey. 6283

## MGF

**1999, 89,000 miles, £600.** Excellent engine, excellent interior but needs bodywork due to surface rust. Bumpers removed. All parts wrapped, bagged and labelled. Wing replaced and needs painting. Runs sweet. Rear screen needs replacing. Viewing available. Please call 07802 953962, Bristol. 7437

## MGTF



**2004, 63,000 miles, £5,000.** In black pearl exterior with a red hood. History and MoT Sept. Head gasket, belts and clutch done. Please call 07749 798552, Gloucester. 7824

## MGTF 160 SUNSTROM SE



**2004, 49,000 miles, £3,750.** Nightfire, air-con, FSH, fully loaded including: leather seats, colour-coded high-top, pass. airbag, sports pack 2, bright pack, wood pack fitted, Kmaps upgrade, head gasket done, recent cambelt service, summer use only, always garaged, in fabulous condition and new MoT. Please call 07939 903730, Hampshire. 7664

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## TF XPOWER



**2004, 43,000 miles, £1,500.** Excellent condition, grey, 1.8 litre with 135bhp engine. Owned for six years. Regularly serviced, all major work undertaken by MG specialists. Car has lots of extras. Please call 07503 238859, Surrey. 6830

## ZR/ZS/ZT

### MG ZR 1.4



**2005, 15,500 miles, £2,000.** One female owner and MoT until July 2019. This car includes alloy wheels, a steel spare wheel, electric windows, two keys, factory alarm and immobiliser. Few age related marks otherwise in excellent condition. Reluctant sale due to owners ill health. Please call 0114 2481094. 5065

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### MG TC



**1974, £8,795.** Finished in old English white with red trim interior. 2L Oselli engine with overdrive. All new or refurbished MGB components. Full weather gear. Built with no expense spared. Superb car, fantastic fun and in superb condition. Only used in dry weather. Please call 01953 717618 (T). 5380

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### MG TD



**1951, £26,995.** Finished in ivory black interior, 5 speed gearbox, tonneau cover, side windows and lovely condition. Please call 01206 262123, Essex. 7181

### MGTF 1250



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**1936, £27,500.** Completely rebuilt over the last 2 years. Everything renewed/ restored and documented. Hot XPAG engine. Attractively finished in black with red leather upholstery. Full weather equipment. Ready to drive away. Please call 07801 387062, Norfolk. 6996

## MAGNETTE

### ZA



**1955, £12,000.** Maroon colour, interior all re-trimmed, seats, door cards, new stay up floats in carburetors/ needle valves, new battery, timing chain and tensioner. Please call 07764 188791, Cambridgeshire. 6876

## PARTS FOR SALE

### MG 18GG ENGINE



**1970, 18,000 miles, £850.** Only removed to replace leaking sump seal, otherwise in excellent order. Other new seals fitted plus new water pump and Borg/Beck clutch. Head removed to show engine condition, etc. Head is very rare ex Bill Nicholson. Fully gas flowed with original uprated rocker assembly (1968 head), professionally converted to lead free only 50 miles ago. Very happy to discuss details. Will re-assemble if required once inspected. Please call 07939 539954, Cheshire. 5754

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**£150 ONO.** With overdrive complete, was ok when taken out. Please call 07890 301860, Shropshire. 7451

### MG GT

**£350-£1,750.** Fitted Oselli fast road engine. Tubular manifold Weber carburettor. Electronic ignition, £1,750 and a rollover jig for rubber or chrome, £350. Please call 01354 657108. 2432

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**POA.** Used parts. Two gearboxes, one is non overdrive. Lights and some trim. Various other items for sale. I may have what you're looking for. Clearing garage. Please call 07875 120244, Northumberland. 1628

### MG PARTS

**£5-£50.** Bonnet £30. Boot Lid £30. C/B & R/B Steering Rack £20. Leather rim Steering wheel and Hub £50. Wind Stop £20. Gear Box (non O/D) £35. Original air Cleaners £15. HS4 Carb & manifold. Original cast exh manifold £5. Plus lots more parts that can be sold individual or as a job lot for £200. Please call 01302 772140, S/Yorks. 7473

## MGB/TR SPARES

**POA.** Early B tonneau, and half tonneau with sticks perfect, TR 4a original tonneau duck unused, Tr 3/4 set steel wheels. Please call 07477 414999. 7898

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**£100.** Deck chair covering, in quite good condition. Please call 07879 242768, Essex. 1993

## MGB VARIOUS PARTS

**1967, POA.** Various spares for sale including black seats with red piping, positive earth tach/wiper motor, wire wheel back axle plus hubs and a set of original steel. Please call 07929 920276, Northants. 6807

## MGF PARTS

**£4-£20.** Pedal box, £10. Bosch brake unit and pipework, £20. Bonnet cable, £4. Throttle cable, £4. Two door speakers, £4. Master cylinder, £20. Please call 01404 46570. 2311

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**£20-£70.** Front seats, £50. Front doors, £60. Wings need repair. Windscreen, £25. Boot lid, £20. Bumpers, £25 each. Dist, £50. 1300 steering column, £25. Front hubs and plates complete, £70. Pair of wheels, £20 each. Please call 01524 843902, Lancs. 4871



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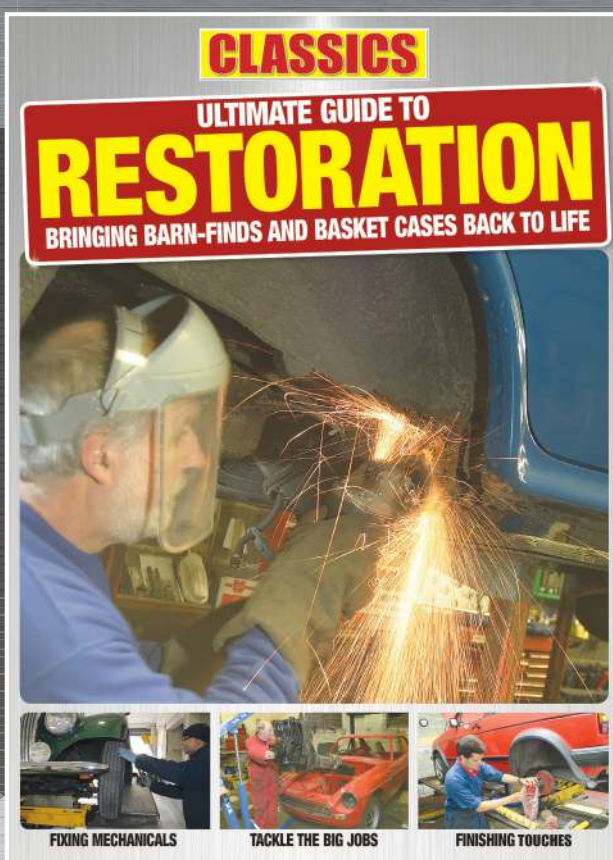
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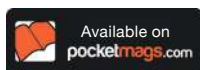
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# CHEQUERED FLAG

## HONDA'S LASTING LEGACY

Over four decades of Honda presence in the UK will come to an end when Swindon manufacture ends. Whatever the reasons, the underlying fact is that the world automotive scene is dramatically changing geographically and not least in the rush towards alternative power. The future, as this year's Geneva Motor Show so clearly demonstrated, is electric and hybrid, with hydrogen surely to become a significant player. Honda's decision is that their future is an electric one, concentrating development and manufacture in Japan. The bitter irony is that Swindon's second-to-none quality levels have counted for nothing.

What has never been in doubt is how much the Honda joint venture has contributed to the UK industry and, of course, to the national economy. The fact that Honda is essentially an

engineering-led organisation meant that there was always a strong synergy with Austin Rover and Rover Group design teams. The Honda Ballade was the inspiration for the Rover 200/400 Series that would have so profound an effect on Rover fortunes, while the 800 Series repositioned the Viking marque as a genuine contender in the prestige luxury sector. Under BMW control, range development was understandably constrained to protect the German brand, but low-volume models like the 'Tomcat' Coupé and the Rover-BRM hinted at a latent performance potential.

This was finally realised when BMW cast Rover Group aside and the newly formed MG-Rover launched the Rover 25/45, together with the MG ZR and MG ZS that reinterpreted the octagon marque. The MG versions were hard-edged drivers' cars that totally delivered



**ABOVE:** The beautifully-balanced ZS was a final flowering of the long-running UK-Honda relationship.

on their promise. The MG ZR – whose influence can still be seen in the SAIC MG3 – was an astounding success in the tough hot-hatch sector, becoming the UK's top selling hatchback. Its competition potential would be fully realised in both rallying and racing, while the bigger brother MG ZS enjoyed an exceptional racing career and won plaudits for its handling, a tradition that continues in today's models. Certainly an enviable heritage from Honda roots.

## DESERVED ACCOLADE FOR SIR JACKIE STEWART




**ABOVE:** Typically, Sir Jackie Stewart was more than happy to make time for an unscheduled Silverstone welcome for Roger Pearce, who had driven his MGB GT overland from South Africa for the 2004 MGCC International Weekend.

This year's Goodwood Festival of Speed will be honouring the many achievements and the 80th birthday of Sir Jackie Stewart in a year that includes the 50th anniversary of his first British Grand Prix win at Silverstone in 1969 and winning his first World Championship in a Matra for Ken Tyrrell the same season. Stewart would go on to win two further Championships for Ken Tyrrell and the Tyrrell Grand Prix team in 1971 and 1973.

Mere records do less than justice to someone who has proved to be not only a supreme ambassador for motorsport, his beloved Scotland and the UK, but who has always been approachable, helpful and utterly professional. Every journalist who has ever met him will confirm this, and even with the busiest schedule, no-one is ever ignored, something I discovered in 2004 when I asked for, and got, a seemingly impossible photo opportunity.

His Presidency of the British Racing Drivers Club was crucial

at a time of great uncertainty, but his determination is absolute and his campaigning for motor racing safety, notably in Formula One, initially fiercely opposed, has since transformed a sport where driver deaths were always seen as inevitable. The consequence is safety at every level of the sport, from the youngest participants upward. Now Sir Jackie has embarked on what he regards as his biggest challenge, launching the charity *Race Against Dementia* to seek a cure for the dreadful disease that affects thousands of sufferers and their families, and from which Lady Helen is also suffering.

At Goodwood we can expect cars and personalities from the Stewart motoring years, but one very important figure will be sadly missing, namely Ken Tyrrell, who first recognised the huge potential of the young Scot. Theirs was an enduring partnership founded on a handshake, which probably tells us all we need to know about the driver we are honouring this July. 



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**MG B GT V8, 1975.** Midnight Blue, Webasto sunroof. Converted to factory V8 specification. Total body restoration just completed which included new sills, new front wings, new rear half wings, and full bare metal respray. Professionally converted to V8 and fitted with 3528cc engine. Fully working overdrive; New front suspension, new brakes, new rear suspension including Gaz rear shock absorbers, stainless steel exhaust; New 15 Minitor alloy wheels and tyres; New chromework. Fitted with beige leather interior and new carpet. Sunroof in excellent condition. Stunning MG B GT V8, which drives as well as it looks. **£17,500**



**MGB Roadster, 1964.** Iris Blue, Pull-Handle model. Restored condition. Old invoices & MOT's, history dating back to 1988. Full service less than 2,000 miles ago and Exhaust replaced at the same. Electronic Ignition. Period interior with Black leather seats piped in Light Blue matched with a Black carpet set. Navy vinyl hood. **£16,500**



**1975 MG B Roadster, 1976.** Stunning Bermuda Blue, Overdrive, Chrome wire wheels, Leather interior, body restored and painted in stunning metallic Bermuda Blue, complimented by beautiful leather interior, black piped in red; New carpet and trim; New Mohair style hood; Walnut dash; Wooden steering wheel New front and rear wings, new sills, New front suspension **£14,500**



**MGB Roadster 1972.** Teal Blue, Overdrive, Chrome wire wheels, Leather. Body restored to a high standard with new sills, wings, and full bare metal respray, including the engine compartment. Fitted with brand new chrome wire wheels; MGOC seats in navy blue "rusche" leather cost £1,200, new carpet, new chromework, new grill, walnut dash, etc **£14,500**



**MGB Roadster, 1971.** Tartan red, Overdrive, Chrome Wire Wheels, Leather Bare metal respray completed in 2018; Brand new black/piped in red leather interior. Engine fully serviced; good oil pressure, and ready to enjoy. Fitted with a fully functioning overdrive gearbox, Brand new Mohair style hood; New chrome wire wheels; New chromework **£12,500**



**MGB GT 1972.** British Racing Green, O/D, Alloy Wheels, Webasto sunroof. Restored bodywork, new floorpans, sills & wings, rebuilt engine, new Tan leather interior piped in green, matching carpet. White gauges, walnut dash. **£11,500**



**MGB GT 1972.** Rosso Red, O/D. Total body and interior refurbishment 2018. Near perfect panel gaps. Black piped in Red Leather interior, new carpet, trim, and seats. Detailed engine compartment. Fully serviced. **£10,500**

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**Alfa Spider S3, 1986.** LHD. Rosso Red, only 77,000 miles on the clock. Complete body respray 2016, New Mohair hood, Refurbished alloy wheels. New carpet just fitted. **£9,750**



**MGB GT 1973.** Teal Blue, Wire Wheels. Restored Bodywork, unleaded engine, fully functioning overdrive gearbox. New Black leather interior just fitted, new chromework, new grill. Full history. **£9,500**



**MG B GT, 1971.** Glacier White, Overdrive, Chrome wire wheels, Leather, Webasto sunroof. Bare metal respray carried out in 2018; New interior consisting of new carpet, and black piped in white leather seats and trim. Chrome wire wheels fitted a couple of years ago and still rust free **£9,500**



**MG B GT, 1973.** Pageant Blue. Overdrive, Alloy wheels, Leather, Bodywork in restored condition having undergone a full bare metal respray in 2018; Unleaded engine has excellent oil pressure and runs extremely smoothly, and fully functioning overdrive gearbox. New black/piped in white interior just fitted; New chromework; New grill. New Miniite style alloy wheels. FULL HISTORY from year of manufacture!! **£9,500**



**MG B GT Mk1, 1966.** Tartan Red. Rare MG B GT Mk1 fitted with overdrive and wire wheels Bare metal respray carried out 2017/18 Black interior. **£8,500**



**MGB GT 1971.** British Racing Green, O/D. Restored. Bodywork, MGB Bonnet, brand new 15" knock-on Alloy Wheels. Chrome wire wheels can be fitted. **£8,500**



**MG Midget 1275cc, 1972.** MG Midget 1275cc Mk3 Round Wheel Arch model Body totally & professionally restored in 2007 with excellent paintwork. Rebuilt gearbox just fitted. Black interior. **£8,500**



**MG TF 2003.** British Racing Green. Lovely example of an MG TF in British Racing Green with low mileage. Only 57k miles from new with service history. Head gasket replaced at 42k miles with invoice. Bodywork in excellent condition with no rust; Black cloth interior in very good condition; Excellent hood with new rear glass; Includes matching HARD TOP and 16 inch alloy wheels! **£2,750**

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